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The First British General Strike

THE British and international bourgeoisie are singing their song of triumph over the defeat of the British general strike. It is a song that will be short-lived. The British general strike is not only the greatest revolutionary advance in Britain since the days of Chartism, and the sure prelude of the new revolutionary era, but its very defeat is a profound revolutionary lesson and stimulus. Gigantic tasks await the working-class vanguard in Britain: but henceforth the old conditions can no longer continue; the old British social fabric of parliamentary and democratic hypocrisy has received shattering blows; and the British working class has entered into a new era, the era of mass struggle, which can only culminate in open revolutionary struggle. By their methods of suppressing the general strike, by their open dictatorship and display of armed force, by their ruthless prosecution of the struggle on the basis of war, by their transference at last of the methods of armed force from the colonies into Britain itself, the British bourgeoisie has taught the proletariat a lesson of inestimable revolutionary value. The defeat of the general strike is itself a gigantic piece of revolutionary propaganda.

Not the masses were defeated, but the old leadership, the old reformist trade unionism, parliamentarism, pacifism and democracy. The masses stood solid: these broke down; these were the real casualties of the fight; and the masses will learn to fling them aside when it comes to the future struggle. The driving home of this lesson, the shattering of the old traditions and leadership, the tireless preparation for the future struggle, and above all the building up of an iron revolutionary vanguard of the workers and kernel of new leadership—these are the tasks that follow on the collapse of the general strike.

This article was written on May 15, immediately after the calling off of the general strike.

The general strike has brought the British working class face to face with the political issue of power, with the legal and armed force of the State. The old trade union tradition has been brought to its highest culminating point, only to have its complete impotence shown unless it can pass into this higher plane. The masses have entered into the full highway of mass struggle, and shown a solidarity, courage, tenacity and class-will, which affords the guarantee of future revolutionary victory. This time they entered the struggle with the old traditions, apparatus, leadership, all fundamentally opposed to the struggle, and only dragged along with them by the force of their mass-will; their limbs were shackled by the myriad trade union-economic-pacifist-legalist-constitutional-democratic traditions; and under these conditions defeat in the first shock was inevitable. But the positive lessons of the struggle are stronger than all the treacheries of the reformist leadership. The class-character of the State has been exposed. The trappings of parliament, democracy, trade union legalism and economism have been torn aside, and laid bare the naked class-power opposition with its ultimate weapon of armed force. The future struggle in Britain can henceforth only be the revolutionary mass struggle with an open political aim. The bourgeoisie have themselves shown the way forward to the proletariat.

The first British general strike is so decisive a turning point in British history, its whole process so complete a picture of the existing stage of the Working-Class Movement, and the lessons to be drawn from it on fuller analysis so infinite and varied, that at the present moment in an article written immediately after the calling off of the general strike, it is only possible to deal with a few of the simplest and plainest issues.

(1) *The Drive to the Crisis.*

The first British general strike was at once the culmination of a whole epoch, and the beginning of a new era. It was the extreme point of the development of the old trade unionism and economic struggle, which by the inevitable process of concentration and enlargement had reached the point of automatically passing into a political struggle, *i.e.*, a conflict with the whole

forces of the State, whereas the fight was still being endeavoured to be fought by the old means. It was at the same time the reflection of the new revolutionary forces, of the complete economic and social unsettlement and decline of British capitalist society, of the consequent pressure of the masses towards more fundamental aims, of the younger militant workers who were driving forward the old leaders, of an incipient mass struggle which went far beyond trade unionism.

This double character is the secret of its history. It was essentially a political struggle, the first stage of the revolutionary struggle of the masses for power ; but this struggle was endeavouring to find expression through an obsolete apparatus of liberal trade unionism and parliamentarism which was wholly unsuited for it and could only betray it. From this arises its tremendous significance in the future and the reason for its immediate failure in the present.

From 1911 to 1926 everything was driving with cumulative impetus to a clash between the whole forces of capitalism and the working class in Britain. In 1911, in the first great national Railway Strike, for the first time the State with its armed forces appeared as a direct protagonist in an industrial dispute. Troops lined the railways and bridges. In words that sunk deep into the memory of every militant worker, the Prime Minister, Asquith, declared that the whole resources of the State were behind the railway companies. From that date the most far-sighted of the militant workers knew that there was something more than the economic struggle of trade unionism in front in the path to emancipation. And from that date the Government became more and more directly concerned in every large-scale industrial crisis, and more and more concentrating attention on the preparations for large-scale conflict with the whole trade union forces.

This outcome of liberal trade unionism was inevitable with the concentration of capitalism. Liberal trade unionism can only exist alongside liberal free trade capitalism, where competition still has free play. Once the industries are linked up and syndi-

cated into national trusts, closely interlocked and organised through the banks and the State, there is no more room left for the free play of bargaining. The trade unions are compelled to mass their forces likewise on a national scale to meet their opponents. Henceforward every slightest economic struggle becomes in fact a trial of strength of massed class forces: the liberal principle of competition has disappeared. Thus in modern state capitalism it follows that trade unionism can only either become the slave of the trusts, as in America and Germany to-day, or else, if the slightest attempt at economic struggle continues, trade unionism must enter on the path of revolutionary class struggle, involving struggle with the whole State. This has been the situation confronting trade unionism in Britain during the twentieth century.

Thus the history of the past fifteen years has been a history of so-called industrial crises which have been in fact veiled political crises. 1911-1914 were years of ascending unrest. After the war the political character became even more open. 1919 was the revolutionary year. In 1920, with the Council of Action to stop the war on Russia, the trade unions were brought into play on a direct political issue. With 1921 came the supreme test: and the trade union leaders, in terror at the magnitude of the issues opening out before them, surrended at the last hour without a struggle and betrayed the working class. It took four years for the working-class to recover from this deadly blow: but the lesson of Black Friday sank deep, and by 1925 the mass pressure of the united working class front was so strong that the trade union leaders dared not deny it. ("It has been a crucifixion," said Bevin, the transport leader, of the four years since Black Friday, "we cannot go through it again.") The Government was so taken back by the strength of working-class solidarity on Red Friday, 1925, that it deliberately postponed the conflict and paid the £20 millions subsidy in order to prepare more completely. The date of conflict was fixed for nine months ahead, for May Day, 1926.

During all these years the bourgeois view was gathering more and more definite shape, that this constant impending

menace of a general strike must be dealt with once and for all, that the old liberal methods of manœuvring, corruption and trickery were no longer adequate, that a smashing blow must be dealt, and that the legal rights of the trade unions must be curtailed. The Extreme Right has gathered strength; Liberalism has been eclipsed. The policy of stabilisation has contributed to this necessitating the driving down of all the workers' standards. Already in the crisis of 1925 the Prime Minister, Baldwin, had declared in an unguarded moment: "The wages of all workers must come down"—a statement which it was subsequently attempted to deny. The attack on the miners' wages was, as in 1921, only the spearhead of a general attack on the wages and conditions of all workers in order to stabilise capitalism on a basis of lower wages and longer hours; and for this reason, the Government and the employers, after due preparation, pursued a policy actually to provoke the general strike in order to make the attack of the widest possible scope, as was shown in the obviously prepared campaign that immediately followed the collapse.

Thus it seemed that with 1926 the time had come for the long prepared decisive blow. A Conservative Government was in power with an absolute parliamentary majority. The political aspirations of the Labour Party had been thrown into discredit and confusion by the record of the MacDonald Government. The international situation following on Locarno, despite the subsequent unexpected fiasco of Geneva, was favourable for concentration on the fight on the home front. It was a question of Now or Never. The whole bourgeois and governmental policy drove straight to the fight with open provocation.

But at the same time the revolutionary awakening of the masses was reaching a point not before equalled. Behind all the rapid and startling transformation of the social and political fabric in Britain in the twentieth century lay the accelerating decline of British capitalism. From the beginning of the twentieth century the standards of the masses, as shown by the figures of real wages, began to decline. This was already reflected in the pre-war unrest, in the sweeping radical-liberal electoral vote, and then in the subsequent disillusionment and industrial unrest

and militancy. The whole process was powerfully hastened by the results of the war. There followed the four million vote for the Labour Party and the throwing up of the mockery of a Labour Government. Following on its failure came the Left trade union wave and the gathering of the Minority Movement a million strong. Through all this process can be seen the steady deepening and widening and revolutionising of the mass movement in England, the gathering pressure towards more fundamental demands, towards revolutionary issues, towards the struggle for power, groping through the forms and institutions of an obsolete epoch and gradually beginning to find its way. The consciousness of the struggle for power was not yet in more than a primitive stage: the strong consciousness already developed was the sense of class solidarity and the need for united defence against the capitalist attack. But this was already preparation for the fight: and when the fight came, the spirit of the masses was ready to take it up, and to force on their unwilling leaders the revolutionary measure of the general strike.

It was not accidental that the crisis came on the issue of the miners' wages. Alike in 1921, in 1925, and in 1926, the issue was the miners' wages. This issue summed up the existing situation. In the first place, it was just such a broad economic issue as wages and the fight against a reduction of wages that could most easily unite the whole body of the working class at the present stage. In the second place, the coal industry was the acutest expression of the whole crisis of British capitalism ; the brunt of the decline had fallen hardest on the miners ; the inability of capitalism to find any solution, and the naked struggle between profits and the livelihood of the workers was there most clear. Thus the issue of the miners' wages summed up the whole issue of capitalism and the working class in Britain, though in a concealed form, and not yet with a conscious and direct expression.

So it came about that all forces by 1926 had brought England, the classic home of capitalist stability, to become the scene of intensest class conflict, reaching the verge of civil war.

(2) *The Nine Months*

Never was any crisis more completely prepared and forewarned than that of May Day, 1926.

From July, 1925, the Government made its intentions absolutely plain and visibly carried out its preparations. In their defence of the subsidy the Government made clear that they regarded the subsidy only as a means of obtaining a truce in order to prepare a smashing defeat of the working class. It is only necessary to recall two typical declarations of the days immediately following Red Friday. Joynson-Hicks, the Home Secretary, declared:—

> He was going to say straight out what the Prime Minister was alleged to have said in conference—namely, it might be that, in order to compete with the world, either the conditions of labour, hours or wages would have to be altered in this country.
>
> He said to them, coming straight from the Cabinet Councils, the thing was not finished. The danger was not over. Sooner or later this question had got to be fought out by the people of the land.
>
> (August 2, 1925.)

Churchill, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and second in command of Baldwin, used even more militant language to describe the approaching struggle:—

> In the event of a struggle, whatever its character might be, however ugly the episodes which marked it, he had no doubt that the national State would emerge victorious in spite of all the rough and awkward corners that it might have to turn. But if they were going to embark on a struggle of this kind, let them be quite sure that they had decisive public opinion behind them. As the struggle widened, and it became, as it must, a test whether the country was to be ruled by Parliament or by some sort of other organisation not responsible by our elective processes to the people as a whole, new resources of strength would come to the State, and all sorts of action which we should now consider impossible would, just as in the time of the war, be taken with general assent as a matter of course.
>
> (House of Commons, August 6, 1926.)

This language was sufficiently definite. No less definite were the preparations made. The emergency organisation of the Government already initiated under Lloyd George alongside the Emergency Powers Act of 1920, and elaborated under successive Governments (including the "Labour" Government), was pushed forward to a high pitch. In August the Coal Commission was appointed to prepare the diplomatic ground, and wrap up the proposal for a reduction of wages in a voluminous report, which

would afford the Right Wing Labour leaders the basis for betrayal. In September, the O.M.S., or Organisation for the Maintenance of Supplies, was instituted under the auspices of all the leading generals, admirals, and diplomats, with the official blessing of the Government, and by the date of the crisis had enrolled 75,000 volunteers. In October, the Communist leaders, who were alone concentrating all their forces on warning and preparation for the crisis, were put into prison. In January a secret circular to local authorities (from the Ministry of Health) put them in possession of the necessary arrangements and their duties. By February, Joynson-Hicks announced that the Government was "ready." Inspired Press statements indicated the character of the plans: a small cabinet was to be instituted with the supreme power, consisting of Baldwin, Chamberlain, Churchill, Birkenhead, Joynson-Hicks, Cave (law officer), Bridgeman (navy), Worthington-Evans (army), and Hoare (air), the country was to be divided into fourteen districts, with a Government Minister in absolute control in each, with military officer, transport officer, supply officer, &c.; registers of volunteers and stocks were ready; troops were to be posted. When the crisis came, the Government had 200,000 commercial vehicles at its disposal, by reason of a previous subsidy arrangement to private owners; and stocks of coal to supply gas, electricity and utility services for five months. In addition the police service had been inconspicuously increased.

In the face of these open preparations of the Government, the official Labour direction made no attempt to meet them. When the crisis finally broke out, MacDonald in the heat of the moment at the Trade Union Conference which decided on the general strike declared the truth about the Government's policy during the nine months:—

> From that day to this, the Government have not devoted five minutes' time to considering the coal problem except so far as it is associated with O.M.S.

But right through the nine months there was no recognition of this fact, and no warning of the workers, but only the whole time lulling and disarming and suggestions of a peaceful settlement; so that at that same Conference Bevin could make a statement which, set alongside MacDonald's, sums up the position:—

The Trade Union Movement had had no thought of war. The General Council had believed peace would accrue.

Alone the revolutionary Left, represented by the Communist Party and the Minority Movement, concentrated all its energy on warnings and preparation. They demanded :—

(1) Unification of the Trade Union command through the General Council.
(2) Factory Committees.
(3) 100 per cent. Trade Unionism.
(4) Agreement between Trade Unions and Co-operatives for supplies during the struggle.
(5) Workers Defence Corps against Fascism.
(6) Propaganda to the soldiers and sailors.

The majority of the official leadership, while maintaining platonic pledges of solidarity with the miners, preferred to place their hopes on a possible peaceful settlement, an expected continuance of the subsidy, &c. At Christmas, 1925, came out a manifesto of the Labour Party Leader, MacDonald, for "Industrial Peace" in the Rothermere capitalist journal, *Answers;* and at the same time a manifesto for "peace and goodwill in industry" was issued, signed by Lansbury along with leading employers. In January, 1926, the General Council met the miners; and, according to the *Daily Herald*, the prevailing view was that "conflict was not inevitable"; the Chairman of the General Council, Pugh, declared that "no special significance need be attached to the Conference. No steps of any kind could be taken until the Report of the Coal Commission had been issued" (*Daily Herald*, January 20, 1926). At the end of January the General Council appointed its special Industrial Committee to maintain contact with the miners, consisting of Thomas, Pugh, Walkden (Right Wing); Tillett, Bromley, Hicks (Left tendency); and Hayday, Walker and Citrine. According to *The Times* correspondent, "the committee can hardly be said at present to have formulated any policy, but it is going on the assumption that the subsidy cannot be suddenly stopped in May" (*The Times*, January 30, 1926). In February, the Co-operative Wholesale directors officially disclaimed any intention to help the workers in a struggle or even grant credits. The same month the General Council turned down

the question of more powers, and issued a circular refusing to carry out the Scarborough Congress instruction to call a Conference of trade union executives on this question. In March the Coal Commission Report appeared, with its proposals for the reduction of miners' wages; and, while the whole capitalist Press conducted propaganda in its favour as an impartial verdict, the Labour Movement placed an official ban of silence on every individual leader to allow no adverse expression of opinion (there were plenty of welcomes by Right Wing leaders); so that the real meaning of the Report was only expressed in the Communist Press. When the final crisis came, the General Council exerted all its pressure on the miners to induce them to abandon their position and accept the Report; and only the stubborn opposition of the miners prevented their realising this. Right to the last the official Labour direction maintained the policy of obscuring the issue and concealing the combative plans of the Government. Even after the blow had fallen, the official Labour organ came out with a leader headed "Mr. Baldwin Blunders Into War," which declared that only "one phrase caused the breakdown" (a "phrase" about miners' wages) and added the fool's judgment that Mr. Baldwin "has spent £20,000,000 of the nation's money to no purpose" (to very efficient purpose from the bourgeois point of view); while the final issue of the Labour organ before the conflict came out with an appeal to Mr. Baldwin as to a god above the battle: "Let him cease to be the tool of Big Business. Let him be the Prime Minister of the People" (*Daily Herald*, May 3, 1926).

The failure of the official Labour direction before the conflict was not only a failure to foresee it or to prepare for it. It was also a direct breaking of the working-class ranks and playing into the hands of the Government. At the Scarborough Trades Union Congress, in September, where the tide of working-class feeling after the success of Red Friday ran high, many strong resolutions were carried, on the proposals of the Communists, but not one of the resolutions came from the official leadership, or even from the Left leaders, and no attempt was made to put them into operation after the Congress. On the other hand, at the Liverpool Labour Party Conference in October, the Right Wing

leaders of the Labour Party, panic-striken for their own position at the red light of Scarborough, forced the whole trade union machine (by very narrow majorities) to be put into operation to carry out the exclusion of the Communists; and the Left leaders put up no opposition. This direct invitation to the Government was followed within a fortnight by the arrest of the Communist leaders. The protests of the Labour Party leaders were formal and without backing, and devoted mainly to expressing disapproval of the Communists rather than of the Government. Finally, when the Coal Commission Report came out, the Right Wing leaders openly welcomed and acclaimed it; and the Left leaders again attempted no counter-propaganda and did not even express opposition. Hodges declared that "the constructive proposals of the Coal Commission give one cause to rejoice"; MacDonald acclaimed the Report as "a conspicious landmark" and "our triumph"; Henderson welcomed the "valuable reforms" and expressed the view that "within the limits of the Report it is possible to find a solution." Thus the position was that during the nine months the Right Wing leaders were actively engaged, with the passive acceptance of the Left leaders on the General Council, in sabotaging any measures of defence, in breaking up the working-class ranks, and in playing up to and acclaiming the Government's policy in direct opposition to the registered policy of the Working-Class Movement.

Under these conditions the general strike was in fact surrendered by the reformist leadership before it was called. The calling of a general strike by leaders such as MacDonald, Thomas and Henderson, who had a hundred times declared their opposition to the whole principle of a general strike, and who had sabotaged all measures of preparation, was a sufficiently ominous sign that the struggle, after all attempts to avoid it had failed, would be surrendered at the first opportunity, and failure even courted as a means to discrediting all revolutionary action of the working class.

(3) *The Final Crisis*

What caused the final breakdown, in view of the fact that the reformist leadership was ready to surrender at the outset?

Two forces, which between them expressed the intensification of the class struggle in Britain. On the one side, the pressure of the masses, expressed most powerfully in the rigid refusal of the miners to accept any reduction of wages and the determination of the other workers to stand by them, which pressure compelled the leaders to take up a position from which they tried in vain later to retreat. On the other side, the determination of the Government to force a conflict on the widest possible ground, to call this time at last the quasi-revolutionary bluff of the reformist leaders and compel them to fight, and not to accept their surrender until the whole forces of the working class had been brought into action.

The strength of the mass pressure preceding the conflict was shown in the demonstrations, meetings and branch and district resolutions which poured in on the Union Executives, as well as in all measurable evidence of conferences and ballots. The Miners' Conference of April 9 was with difficulty restrained from carrying a downright rejection of the Coal Report (which was the demand of the Lancashire miners, and according to general opinion would have been carried if put to the Conference); instead a resolution was unanimously adopted repudiating any reduction in wages, increase of hours or district agreements. This resolution, binding the miners' executive, was the irremovable obstacle which the Right Wing leaders on the General Council were unable to get round by all their arts. The ballot votes taken shortly before for a workers' alliance of united action of the mining, transport and engineering workers were also significant; in addition to the unanimous support of the miners' and the transport workers' delegate meetings, they showed majorities in those Unions where full ballots were taken, of 25,000 to 2,000 in the iron and steel trades, of 43,000 to 4,000 in the Workers' Union, and of 70,000 to 31,000 in the engineers; while for the railwaymen Thomas refused to take a ballot. The Minority Conference of Action on March 21, which united delegates of over a million organised workers, astounded even the leaders of the Minority Movement by the tremendous response. This response meant that one-quarter of the organised Working-Class Movement not only willed united action and a revolutionary lead, but was ready, without the assist-

ance of the official movement, to find the means of sending delegations and organising to give expression to their will.

In the face of this mass pressure the reformist leaders could not openly deny their pledges of solidarity to the miners. They could only endeavour to confuse the issue, to appeal to the Government and public opinion, to express confidence of a peaceful settlement, to hunt for a "formula" to concentrate every effort, not to maintaining the front of the workers, but to find a "way out." They sought to water down their pledge from an explicit "no reduction of wages" (February) to a promise of solidarity in seeking "an honourable settlement," "an equitable settlement" (April). They exerted pressure on the miners to retreat from their position. They appealed to the Government, both publicly and privately, in conference and in backstairs parleys, to help them out.

But this precisely the Government was not prepared to do. The Government stood firm, leisurely and unmoved. The subsidy must go ; wages must reach an economic level ; no temporary prolongation of the subsidy would be considered unless this basis was accepted. The appeals of the Right Wing Labour leaders grew desperate and (in Thomas's own word) "grovelling." The General Council leaders were prepared to surrender the position and accept the basis of the Coal Report, but they could not carry with them the miners. The Miners' Executive, unshakable, bound by the mandate of the delegate conference, represented the unbreakable will of the working class. Between the bourgeoisie and the working class there could be no compromise. And because they could not be counted to carry with them the working class, the offers of surrender of the Right Wing leaders were of no value to the Government and were rejected with contempt. A dozen times the act of treachery and surrender was prepared during those last feverish days of the negotiations, and as many times broke down for the same reason. The Government went steadily forward with its final preparations for the inevitable conflict which it was determined to carry through. By the middle of the final week, three days before the Emergency was officially proclaimed, the posters announcing it were being printed, while negotiations were still in full swing

Dispositions of troops were being made ; leave was stopped ; certain naval manœuvres were cancelled ; reserves were being called up. On Friday, April 30, at the same time as negotiations were going on, the Privy Council was meeting and drawing up the necessary Emergency proclamations for the inevitable conflict. As Bevin declared at the Trade Union Conference on May 1, which finally decided on the general strike, " the Government behind the scenes was mobilising its forces for war."

Consequently the efforts of surrender beforehand on the part of the Right Wing Labour leaders failed. For once these past-masters of cant and servility found themselves rejected ; their arts and manœuvring no longer availed ; they were kicked back with contempt by the Government into the ranks of the workers (the worse for the workers) ; and they returned with tears in their eyes to the Labour Conference to swear " before God " they had had no thought but peace :—

> In the name of all that I hold sacred, I tell the British public that I have never been associated with a body of men that have striven, that have turned phrases and words and facts over more patiently to make peace.
>
> (MacDonald at the Trade Union Conference, May 1.)
>
> If we had had another half-dozen hours, the Government could not have decently drawn the sword at all. *They would not give us time.* (*Ibid.*)
>
> Mr. Thomas said he almost grovelled to get peace. Never in his whole experience had he begged and pleaded so hard, not alone in the interests of the miners, but as his duty to the country. " *We failed.*"
>
> (Thomas at the Trade Union Conference, April 30. *Daily Herald*, May 1, 1926.)

So these Right Honourable Privy Councillors signed the order for the general strike, in which they did not believe and which they did not want.

The Trade Union Conference carried the general strike unanimously. The roll-call of Unions ready to come out was taken : it showed 3,653,217 ready, against 49,511 refusals.

One last effort at surrender was made by the Right Wing leaders on the eve of the conflict. On the night of Sunday, May 2,

twenty-four hours before the general strike orders were due to take effect, when the miners' lock-out and the Government Emergency were already in operation, the General Council leaders in charge of the negotiations (it is to be noted that by a skilful stroke of the Right, MacDonald and Henderson had been added "on behalf of the Parliamentary Labour Party" to the Trade Union Industrial Committee which already contained Thomas, and these three experts in treachery became the dominant representatives of the workers in the negotiations) were ready to desert the miners and accept a Government formula for settlement without the miners. This fact did not become known until two days after the conflict had begun, in the House of Commons debate on Wednesday, May 5, in the course of which both Thomas and MacDonald declared that the Trade Union representatives had already accepted the Government formula, when the Government broke off negotiation on the issue of the *Daily Mail* :—

> Mr. J. H. Thomas said that on the vital Sunday evening the negotiating committee of the Trade Union Council sitting at Downing Street received in the Prime Minister's handwriting a form of words which they agreed to accept as the basis of a settlement. They were getting into touch with the miners to secure their agreement, but the news of the stoppage of the *Daily Mail* was brought to Downing Street of which they knew nothing till then. The first that they knew of it was the ultimatum from the Government breaking off negotiations at the very moment when they were agreed on acceptance of the Prime Minister's form of words. *They had in fact taken the responsibility of saying that whatever the miners' views might be, the T.U.C. representatives would accept it.*
>
> (J. H. Thomas in the House of Commons, May 5, 1926.)

Thus the General Council representatives had already deserted the miners before the general strike began.

But the Government brushed this surrender aside ; and in doing so revealed their intentness on engaging the conflict along the whole line. They declared that the General Council representatives were "not plenipotentiaries" since they could not carry with them the miners. They declared that the issue of the general strike far outweighed the original issue. And they finally broke off negotiations on the issue of the *Daily Mail*—a spontaneous action of the workers themselves of which the leaders had no knowledge and

which they were ready to disown and apologise for. But when they came to the Cabinet room to make their explanations, according to the statement of MacDonald, "they found the door locked and the whole room in darkness." Their explanations were not wanted when the hour of action had begun.

The Baldwin Government had gone to war, had gone to war for the "freedom of the Press"; not over the miners, not over the degradation of the workers' standards, not over the attack on the whole Working-Class Movement, but for the "freedom of the Press"; the Baldwin Government, which holds the press chained, curbed or forbidden all over the world, and which came fresh from the impounding and seizing of the issues of the *Workers' Weekly* six months ago and the imprisonment of the editorial staff.

But the Trade Union leaders were not disposed to raise these things. They issued a statement that the stopping of the *Daily Mail* was "unauthorised" and had been done without their knowledge. And they entered the struggle with the one thought to find by one way or another the most rapid way out to call it off.

In this way the general staffs of the two sides entered the conflict.

The leadership of the working class went to battle with treachery thus already manifested in their ranks and concealed from the workers, with the knowledge among themselves that there was this treachery in their ranks, with division between the General Council and the miners, with division between Right and Left in the General Council itself. And alongside, the *Daily Herald* came out in its last issue on the eve of the conflict, with its final admonition to the workers in flaming letters: "TRUST YOUR LEADERS! Heed none who speak ill of those in command. Any who try to sow distrust are the worst foes of Labour, worse than any Capitalist."

The British Government and the bourgeoisie went to battle with a single front and aim, closing all divisions against the common enemy, with every weapon prepared to prosecute war without reserve to complete victory, and with battle cries calculated to raise the issue to its widest extent.

And yet, despite this contrast of the two leaderships, the shock of the massed battlefront of the entire organised working class shook the whole fabric of society in Britain as it had not been shaken for two and a half centuries.

(4) *A Political Issue*

The greatest strength of the bourgeoisie was that they recognised with absolute clearness the political character of the conflict.

They recognised from the outset that it was not simply a question of a particular figure of wages, nor yet a question of a particular industry, but that it was a struggle of the whole organised strength and power of two classes, in which every weapon of class-power needed to be brought into play. "Either you govern here or we do. There cannot be two dictatorships."

This political character of the conflict was much more clear to the bourgeoisie than to the working-class leaders, who remained to the last clinging to the assertion that it was a "purely industrial conflict." The distinction of the economic and political struggle was to them all in all as the one rope of salvation against being submerged in the flood of revolutionary issues inevitably raised by the actual character of the fight. But the distinction is, in fact, in any large-scale conflict, extremely artificial. As MacDonald himself declared on the occasion of "Red Friday" :—

> If Trade Unionism had to mobilise itself for the legitimate purpose of industrial defence, especially when a Government was concerned, the difference between that and mobilisation for industrial action was extraordinarily thin.
>
> (MacDonald in the House of Commons, August 6, 1925.)

The political struggle is simply the concentrated and most highly organised expression of the economic struggle : and as soon as an economic struggle, of even the most limited original scope, passes to the stage of a general strike, the issue of the relations of class-power is inevitably raised. To imagine that the bourgeoisie, if pressed, will fail to use all the weapons of its dictatorship (out of respect for some supposed rules of the "industrial" game like a game of football) is naive folly.

The bourgeoisie recognised the brute fact that the actual struggle was between the capitalist dictatorship, with its whole apparatus of legal and armed force, and the Working-Class Movement with its mass-loyalty and gathering challenge to the whole capitalist order. This clearness gave them strength in action. They threw without hesitation or scruple every resource and weapon into the field to maintain their class-power against the still confused and half-conscious challenge of the working class.

In the first place, the bourgeoisie directly brought the political issue into the open. They raised all the cries and slogans of their class-power—" democracy," " parliament," " the Constitution," " freedom," " King and Country," " the freedom of the Press "—in order to mobilise all the resources of class-strength and loyalty which they could still command. To meet this would have required the most merciless exposure of the hypocrisy of these cries and of the real dictatorship behind. But the trade union and Labour Party leaders, on the contrary, accepted these slogans and endeavoured to vie with the Government in expounding their loyalty to them. Thus the bourgeoisie exploited the confusion in the ranks of the reformist leadership in order to paralyse the action of the working class.

In the second place, the bourgeoisie brought into play all the weapons of their dictatorship. The whole government apparatus was mobilised and worked overtime. There was no question of any appearance of neutrality of " the State above the classes." It was a war between the Government and the working class. When the " independent " Press of the millionaires was smashed by the action of the working class, the Government not only took up the war publicly on its behalf, and on behalf of its sacred right to deceive the people, but directly issued its own official organ under armed protection and brought up its print to the millions. The whole strike-breaking apparatus was directly organised by the Government under the protection of the whole civil and military power. The police and special police were spread in a network over the industrial centres, to the number of a quarter of a million, to protect the strikebreakers. The full power of the law was brought into play.

The police courts were filled with strikers, strike-pickets, Labour speakers, agitators, literature-sellers, demonstrators in hundreds—but not a single strike-breaker, special police rowdy, coalowner or capitalist' propagandist (nor a single member of the General Council). Under the Emergency provisions any one could be summarily arrested and imprisoned for any action or speech likely to cause " disaffection " ; and this was interpreted to include the mere issuing or even possession of leaflets inciting to strike. The process of law was set into motion with unprecedented rapidity to secure within a week of the strike a High Court of Justice decision that the general strike was " illegal " and every striker and trade union official was personally liable and outside the protection of the law (the calling off of the general strike followed immediately within twenty-four hours of this decision). Finally the Army, the Air Force and the Navy were brought into play. Warships were stationed outside the ports ; and when at Newcastle the strikers appeared to be gaining the upper hand, cruisers were dispatched to command it from the sea. Troops were concentrated in all the industrial areas ; the East End of London was covered with the picked Guards troops ; armoured convoys were transported through the streets ; and armoured cars and tanks paraded through London. In the last days of the strike, just before the calling off, the first incidents had already begun of the use of the troops against the population (soldiers at Hull and marines at Middlesbrough).

Against all this concentrated attack the reformist leadership of the trade unions and the Labour Party was completely confused, paralysed and helpless. They could not admit that the working class was at war with the State. To admit that they were at war with the State would have been to admit their own bankruptcy. For them the sanctity of the Capitalist State, its super-class character, the sanctity of the Capitalist Democracy were the corner-stone of their political being. If that corner-stone collapsed, if the card-castle of Capitalist Democracy came tumbling down, there was nothing left but the naked revolutionary struggle and, ultimately, the armed struggle in front of the working class. Therefore, they could only shut their eyes to all that was going on around them. They remained feebly and helplessly protesting to the end that it

was a " purely industrial struggle." Anybody with one eye in his head could see that it was not. It was not a fight with a group of employers. It was a fight with the whole forces of the State. The official Labour direction had to remain with its head in the sand to the end. They remained protesting their loyalty to the Crown and Constitution, that is, to the very forces that were being organised against them. In their official strike organ they directly suppressed the news of the wholesale arrests that were taking place, the police raids (which moved even a Right Wing Labour M.P. like Haden Guest to protests against their wanton brutality), the breaking up of meetings, the mounted police baton-charges into helpless crowds. The bravest fighters of the working class, who were going to prison in hundreds, were without honour in the Labour organ, which instead was publishing news of jolly billiard matches between police and strikers in some remote village, or advising strikers to stay at home and amuse the children. Such was the culmination of hypocrisy to which Reformist Pacifism was reduced in the actual class struggle.

The *British Worker*, the organ of the General Council, proclaimed again and again in large black type :—

> AN INDUSTRIAL ISSUE ONLY
>
> The General Council does NOT challenge the Constitution.
> It is not seeking to substitute unconstitutional government.
> Nor is it desirous of undermining our Parliamentary institutions.
> The sole aim of the Council is to secure for the miners a decent standard of life.

Or again, in explanation of the distinction :—

> Do make every one understand that this is an industrial, not a political dispute. It concerns wages, decent conditions of life, fair methods of negotiation ; not the Constitution, nor the Government, nor the House of Commons.

These proclamations were issued when the struggle had already entered into a full political stage, and when the masses were feeling the full weight of the Government attack. The General Council, instead of recognising the new plane of the struggle, and coming out boldly in opposition to the Government, instead of utilising the Government's attack in order to make clear to the masses the real

character of the struggle, remained protesting the original industrial character of the conflict and the innocence of its intentions, and servilely affirming its loyalty to a Government which was hitting the working class on the head. The General Council refused to see that even the fight for wages, in the stage which had now been reached, necessarily involved the fight against the whole apparatus of the Government, and that, if this fight was not faced, the fight for wages also could not be carried on. Instead of saying "We are fighting for decent standards of life, and not against the Government and Constitution," they should have said, "We are fighting for decent standards of life, and, since the Government and the Constitution stand with the employers against this, therefore we are compelled to fight the Government and Constitution."

The General Council was not ready for this. Therefore, the General Council could not carry on even the original struggle. The General Council had to abandon the struggle for wages.

(5) *The Power of Mass Struggle*

Four million workers entered on the struggle.

The solidarity was absolute. With a unanimity and discipline that staggered the organisers themselves the workers responded to the call. Not only that, but many more workers came out than were called. It was impossible for the General Council to restrain the enthusiasm of the working class.

Bromley, one of the leaders of the General Council, declared in the House of Commons that they had had to send masses of workers back to work who had come out in sympathy, and claimed credit for the General Council that they had succeeded in preventing hundreds of thousands from striking. The organ of the General Council, the *British Worker*, announced :—

> The trouble everywhere is to keep those men at work who have not yet been ordered to strike.
>
> (*British Worker*, May 6.)

Even under the limited conditions of the struggle, with the only partial calling out that took place and the extensive system of

permits of the General Council, the power of the action of the masses was shown. The productive processes of the country were effectively paralysed. The mines, the docks, the railways, the repair shops, the printing presses were all deserted. The handful of activities of almost entirely middle-class strike-breakers could not affect the real losses of the stoppage, as the business world clearly enough knew. The Government, despite all their elaborate preparations, were taken aback by the vastness and extent of the movement. The newspapers stopped ; and a paralysis much greater than the war descended on the country. The Government, in complete possession of the finest printing machinery in the world, with troops to guard it, was unable even to bring out a tiny newspaper until the second day (and even then their sole type-setter to begin with was a one-time linotype operator who had become a master-printer and a business manager). When *The Times* appeared on the second day, it consisted of one tiny sheet, 33 centimetres by 20. The supply of volunteers was wholly inadequate. On the third day, after two days' hard recruiting, the Government boasted that in the whole London area they had won 12,000 volunteers. In the whole Northern Division they had won 10,000.

Not only that, but the masses showed a capacity and initiative of active struggle which swept past the passive inactivity of the General Council. All over the country a terrific struggle was undertaken against the Government's strike-breakers. Masses of workers held up the strike-breaking lorries and 'buses, and forced the drivers to descend. The Government responded with violence. Wholesale police charges, mounted police charges, and arrests were carried out in defence of the strike-breakers. Collisions took place all over the country. In vain the General Council issued instructions to the workers to remain passive, to remember that it was an " industrial " conflict, to remain at home and mind the children or look after the garden, and to keep off the streets. The workers pressed forward into the fight with unhesitating class-instinct, left completely without official direction, against the endless admonitions and rebukes of their legalist pacifist leaders, with only the revolutionary nucleus in each locality to guide, and threw themselves again and again into the struggle.

The difficulties of the Government were shown by the fact that in the Newcastle District (the great coal, iron and shipping region of the North East coast) the Government Minister in charge, Sir Kingsley Wood, declared it impossible to continue his task of maintaining the government apparatus of supplies, and invited the local strike committee to help him out—which they refused to do. Immediately on this, the Government sent an urgent message to all localities, instructing no surrender and no co-operation with the local strike committees.

It was at this point, when the strikers were visibly gaining ground, that the Government brought into play the military and legal weapon. A direct Government incitement to violence was issued to all troops on May 7 in the following terms :—

> All ranks of the armed forces of the Crown are hereby notified that any action which they may find it necessary to take in an honest endeavour to aid the civil power will receive both now and afterwards the full support of His Majesty's Government.

On May 8 occurred the first uses of the troops against the population at Hull and Middlesbrough. On May 9 the first armed convoy was conducted through London, with an escort of cavalry, mounted police, sixteen armoured cars and two regiments in full war kit. At the same time the Government had begun to recruit a new Auxiliary Corps or Civil Constabulary Reserve, to be composed solely from Officers Training Corps members, Territorials, Special Police and ex-soldiers "vouched for at Territorial Army units headquarters." Meanwhile the legal attack was pushed forward. The speech of the Liberal lawyer, Sir John Simon, in the House of Commons declaring the strike illegal and every official calling it liable "to the uttermost farthing of his personal possessions" was broadcast by the Government. On May 11 came the High Court judgment of Sir John Astbury officially declaring the general strike illegal.

Thus the intensity of the struggle was growing with every day, and it was clear to all that critical events were threatening throughout the country. The solidarity of the strikers was greater than ever,

and their spirit and confidence unbroken. The number of the strikers was increasing with every day of the strike, and indeed reached its highest point the day after the "settlement." Impatient of the delays and hesitations of the General Council, bodies of workers all over the country were joining the strike without waiting for central orders. In addition increasing numbers of industries were becoming paralysed and throwing out more workers. Numbers of unorganised workers were joining the Unions in a body.

At this moment came the sudden capitulation of the General Council on May 12.

(6) *The Collapse of the Reformist Leadership*

The capitulation of May 12 came as a thunderclap without warning to the majority of the workers all over the country. Nevertheless it was in fact only the inevitable sequel of all that had gone before.

From the outset of the strike the scene presented by the central direction was in startling contrast to the scene throughout the country. The natural unity of the struggle throughout the country was replaced at the centre by paralysing divisions and, on the part of certain responsible leaders, unconcealed hostility to the whole general strike itself. Those leaders who had voted the general strike out of fear and not out of conviction, and who had never believed they would have to carry it out, were now exerting all their efforts to paralyse its action and bring it to a speedy conclusion. Thomas openly declared during the struggle that he was against the general strike. MacDonald made in the House of Commons the speech of a strike-breaker and a coward. He is reported to have said :—

> I again ask this House if it cannot do it (resume negotiations). *I am not speaking for the Trades Union Congress at all. I am speaking for nobody.* I have not consulted my colleagues. I am speaking from my own heart. *I am not a member of a Trade Union*, and therefore am a little freer than some of my colleagues, and can do things for which perhaps I will get blamed to-morrow by the trade unionists, but I cannot let this opportunity go.
>
> (MacDonald in the House of Commons, May 5, 1926.)

The intrigues of the Right Wing leaders were neither countered nor

exposed by the Left leaders, but in the interests of "unity" the facts were concealed and the workers left without warning.

From this situation resulted a paralysis of direction at the centre. From the moment of the calling of the general strike there was no decisive attempt to follow up the fight, but only hesitation, delay and a continual vacillating between the possibilities of negotiating or a vigorous prosecution of the struggle. Just as there had been complete failure to prepare the struggle, just as there had been complete failure to present the issues and stand up to the Government, so there was equal failure to conduct the struggle; and for the same reason, namely, the confusion and fundamental opposition to the whole struggle within the leadership. The general strike had been called, but almost by accident or mistake rather than conviction on the part of the majority of the leadership; and the working-class leaders were as lacking in self-confidence as the Government was abounding in it. The sacrifice, the fighting force and the enthusiasm of the working class were thrown into the field; but instead of there being behind them the strongest leadership to exact the maximum advantage and drive the hardest blows upon the Government, there came from the General Council only efforts to restrain the workers, to send workers back to work, to prevent more workers coming out, legalist-pacifist appeals, pleas, apologies, protests that they did did not wish the fight, rallying behind the Archbishop of Canterbury, &c. Everything depended upon the most rapid blows being dealt before the Government and the bourgeoisie had time to organise more fully; but the strikers waited in vain for the follow-up move to the first calling out. The "second line" that was to follow the first was continually talked about, but until the last day nothing was done. Finally in impatience some of the biggest districts of the engineering and shipbuilding workers—the Clyde and Merseyside—called out the workers on their own district authority, and so forced the hands of the General Council.

It was therefore only a question of time when the cracking up at the centre would occur. The critical turn of events and the intensified offensive of the Government hastened its occurrence.

On May 11 came the court judgment of the illegality of the general strike and of the personal responsibility of the leaders. That same evening the General Council decided the time had come to call off the strike. They seized on the pretext of the Samuel Memorandum (which was simply a re-hash of the Coal Report and its proposals for the reduction of miners' wages) as offering a "new" hope of settlement; and presented it like an ultimatum to the miners—who had not been consulted. The miners stood firm to the position to which originally all had been pledged. Then the General Council at last took their courage in their hands—the courage of treachery—and after a last unsuccessful plea publicly deserted the miners. Late that night the miners left; MacDonald and the General Council remained together. Next morning the General Council went to the Prime Minister and made their surrender. The miners issued an official statement, disclaiming all responsibility for the calling off of the general strike.

It was a capitulation without conditions. The Samuel Memorandum, which was in any case worthless, was in no way formally binding on the Government. The Government was able to claim its formal victory of unconditional surrender as well as its material victory. The General Council did not even secure any conditions for the return to work of the strikers or the protection of the Unions, as the events of the next few days were to show.

It was a capitulation, based on the desertion of the miners. The miners were left fighting alone.

It was a capitulation without any justifying basis in the situation of the struggle or in the readiness of the Working-Class Movement throughout the country. The Working-Class Movement throughout the country was solid; the strikers' ranks were daily increasing, the engineering, shipbuilding and electrical workers had just added half a million more to the strikers; there was no hint of unreadiness to continue the struggle. On the contrary the news of the calling off was received everywhere with mystification and disbelief; strikers' meetings were held demanding continuance; hostile demonstrations took place outside trade union offices and were dispersed by the police with casualties.

What was the reason of the capitulation at this point?

Two reasons are discernible in the statements so far made by the leaders most directly responsible.

One was the fear of the possibilities in front, with the Government's military threats and the legal attack.

The other was the fear of the revolutionary possibilities and the Working-Class Movement passing out of their control. In the House of Commons on the day after the settlement Thomas stated:—

> *What he dreaded about this struggle more than anything else was that by any chance it should get out of the hands of those who would be able to exercise some control. Every sane man* would know what would happen then. That was why he believed that the decision yesterday was such a big decision.

(7) *Some Conclusions*

The price of the betrayal of May 12 is a heavy one. A campaign of repression has followed immediately on the capitulation and is being pushed to the furthest extremes. This campaign has been actively organised by the Government (alongside hypocritical talk of "reconciliation") and taken up with obvious concerted preparation by the whole body of employers. The Government on the day after the settlement issued a notice to employers through their official organ in two million copies under the heading "No obligations," stating that the Government had undertaken no obligations with regard to the reinstatement of strikers; and at the same time the Government set the example in its own departments under the Admiralty and War Office in refusing to reinstate strikers or in penalising them on return. The employers have demanded new agreements shackling the unions from undertaking further strikes save after due and long notice, conciliation machinery, &c.; have refused to give any promise of taking back strikers save individually, with discrimination and at their leisure; have insisted on the retention of the non-union strike-breakers in future to work alongside the trade unionists; and in some cases have endeavoured to prohibit trade unionism or to prohibit trade unionism in the supervisory grades. The shameful Railway Agreement, signed by Thomas, Cramp, Bromley and Walkden, and conceding all these points (no guarantees on reinstatement save "as soon as work can be found"; recognition of the strike as "a wrongful act" and of the com-

panies' rights to legal damages; guarantees against future strikes save after proper negotiation, and no support for unauthorised strikers; no strike participation for supervisory grades; exclusion from settlement of all militant workers—" persons guilty of violence or intimidation ") is typical of the employers' policy, and has served as a model for the other industries, in particular the transport settlement and the printing settlement.

By this means the Government and employers are endeavouring to extract the maximum advantage from the capitulation in order to bind trade unionism hand and foot. New legislation is also threatened to curtail the powers of the union.

The campaign of repression has been particularly heavy against all militant workers and Communists. It has been, in fact, heavier after the " settlement " than before, the whole emergency apparatus and dictatorship being maintained in force. A typical example may be given from the police reports:—

> Under the Emergency Regulations. John Forshaw, 47, was charged at the Salford Police Court with having at his premises in Peacock Street a document headed a " Great Betrayal," likely to cause disaffection among the civil population. He was found guilty, and remanded in custody for judgment. The police stated that they found on the premises copies of the document and a duplicating machine complete with stencil. The last paragraph of the stencilled copy called on all workers who had returned to cease work and to convene conferences to decide upon action in support of the miners. The document was signed " Salford District Committee of the Communist Party of Great Britain." Six other men were charged at the same court for having copies of the document in their possession.

From this it will be seen that in England after the General Council's capitulation the mere possession of a document accusing the Labour leaders of " betrayal," and advocating a continuance of the strike, was dealt with by the police and punished with imprisonment.

The lesson to be learnt from the heavy price that is being paid needs to be a heavy one. The future of the working class depends on that lesson being learnt, and on the correct analysis of the experiences that have taken place.

In a characteristic article in the Vienna *Arbeiterzeitung* on " The Lessons of the English Struggle," Otto Bauer, the spokes-

man of the Second International, endeavours to save his colleagues by throwing the blame for the defeat on the English masses. Not the noble strike-heroes, MacDonald, Thomas, &c., were responsible, but the backward English masses who could not rise to the height of their conceptions—this is the typical Austro-Marxist version. Communism, he declares, with its easy explanations ready to hand of the betrayal of the working class by their leaders, is simply repeating the bourgeois individualist outlook of explaining history in terms of individual leaders and is remote from Marxism.

In the same way Austro-Marxism sought to cover up the treachery of the Social Democratic leaders in the war under the plea that the " mood of the masses " was to blame; while the unsavoury Barmat scandals were explained away in the *Arbeiterzeitung* by the statement that " the entire population had become corrupt."

This version of the events and lessons of the English strike is not only a shameless travesty of the facts and an insult to the whole English working class which every English worker who has been through the strike would spit back in his face with contempt (the actual facts are the exact contrary: it is only necessary to consult the leaders' own statements to see how their whole problem and preoccupation was how to hold in the masses, to prevent more strikers coming out, to prevent the struggle extending, to call it off at any price before they lost control of the whole movement), but in addition it is a shameless travesty of Communism and Marxism.

Not this or that individual leader, but a whole policy, a whole social stratum of leadership in the Working-Class Movement, the whole Second International, failed in the British general strike. Only by the relentless exposure of this failure can the mass-movement advance. The development of the mass-movement is not a passive reflex of economic and social conditions, for Herr Bauer to observe from a coffee-house window. The development of the mass-movement proceeds by the interaction of masses and leaders in relation to every struggle and change in conditions. And it is precisely this dialectic of the mass-movement which Bauer ignores, and by

ignoring abandons the whole kernel of Marx's living and fighting teaching. (How vulgar and un-Marxist to Bauer's sensitive ears must sound Marx's reference to the English Labour leaders as "sold to the bourgeoisie.") The leadership of the Second International is to-day the expression and instrument of capitalist influence in the Working-Class Movement. It is precisely this corrupting, stupefying, distorting, betraying influence, embodied in this leadership which needs to be most mercilessly fought if the working class is to advance. And the greatest lesson of this influence and its meaning has come for the English proletariat in the general strike of 1926 and its betrayal.

What is the position? A new phase of struggle has opened out before the English working class. The old trade union struggle, the old parliamentary struggle, have merged into a new mass-struggle which has raised completely new problems. But the whole apparatus, policy and leadership of the Working-class Movement has continued to reflect the conditions of the old struggle, of the old limited sectional struggle, of the period of adaptation to the capitalist state; and is fundamentally hostile to the new struggle or to the endeavour to solve its problems. In consequence, faced with these new problems, the Working-class Movement has had to find itself unready and retreat. But these new problems have to be solved if the Working-Class Movement is to recover and advance.

What is the stage of advance which the general strike represents? The old sectional trade union action had already been condemned on all hands as no longer effective. In the conditions of capitalist decline it was no longer possible to win by this means any important gain in particular industries, or even to check the capitalist degradation of working-class conditions by piecemeal defeating of the workers. A more fundamental class battle with the capitalist regime was necessary. There followed the sweep forward of the trade unions into the parliamentary battle after the war, not merely to secure parliamentary representation for trade union legislative purposes, but to win a Labour Government. But the limitations of parliamentarism were already beginning to become apparent after the experience of the MacDonald Govern-

ment. And in addition, whatever hopes might still be entertained therefrom for the future, and illusions still to be lived through, it was clear to all that the parliamentary future hopes provided no answer to the current struggle of the workers, to the immediate tack of the capitalists and driving down of working-class standards. Therefore the conception of combined trade union action gained ground and overwhelming force, until at last, when the renewed capitalist attack on wages and hours came in 1926, the general strike of the trade unions was proclaimed to answer it.

The general strike was proclaimed as an economic battle of the whole working class. Its advance was that it was the first attempt at a battle of the whole working class, without distinction of sectional interests, against the attack of the whole capitalist class. Its weakness was that it endeavoured to remain confined as a limited economic struggle, without recognising that such a confrontation of the strength of two classes becomes inevitably a political struggle, and in fact a revolutionary struggle. In consequence the Government was able to take advantage of the confusion of the Working-Class Movement and bring every weapon into the field against it, while the Working-Class Movement remained uncertain in aim and completely taken aback by the methods of the Government. Under these conditions defeat was inevitable. These conditions of the struggle must not be repeated.

The collapse of the general strike was the final collapse of the methods of the old trade union economic struggle, as it has been fought in the past, which reached its extreme culminating stage in the general strike and can go no further. The workers are now face to face with the legal and armed force of the State. The future struggle can only be carried forward as the direct political revolutionary struggle with the State. The lesson of the defeat of the general strike of 1926 is not the failure and discrediting of the weapon of the general strike, but the necessity of carrying the general strike forward to the inevitable political revolutionary struggle.

What are the new conditions of the struggle?

First, the new struggle is, by the Government's declaration, an *illegal* struggle, and it is necessary to calculate on this. The High Court declaration of the general strike as illegal is very important. What does it mean? If the General Council calls another general strike, it will have to be prepared to be declared an illegal body. Either this alternative will have to be faced or the General Council will have to abjure the general strike, conform to the requirements of capitalist society, and in fact surrender the leadership of the working class. But what was the purpose for which the general strike was instituted? To organise the common action of the working class. Therefore, the General Council will either have to surrender its function and become a clerical, co-ordinating and negotiating body of the trade unions with no connection with action; or else it will have to be prepared to be declared an illegal body in a crisis.

Thus trade unionism so long as it remains sectional, so long as it remains company-tied and shackled with conciliation machinery, is of too great value to the employers to be attacked and declared illegal. But the revolutionary trade union struggle of to-day, which alone can be of value to the workers under modern conditions, is made illegal.

Second, the new struggle is inevitably a struggle *against the Government*. This has been demonstrated once and for all by the present experience. No matter how limited the original scope, a mass struggle is inevitably a political struggle against the Government and can only be fought as such.

Third, the struggle inevitable brings into play the *armed forces* of the State. Failure to recognise and prepare for this is to court surrender, and abandon all future struggle. But this can only be prepared for by propaganda among the soldiers and sailors, workers' defence, &c., which goes beyond the whole existing movement.

Fourth, and as a consequence of the above, the struggle becomes inevitably a struggle for *political power for the working class*. Neither can the sacrifices demanded for the struggle be forthcoming or justified for any less objective, nor in fact can

any more limited objective be obtained in so fundamental a struggle.

But a struggle of this character is in fact of a completely new type for the English Working-Class Movement; and the question therefore inevitably arises whether the apparatus of the movement is fitted for such a general struggle. The experience of 1926 throws an important light on this. The trade unions proved able to assemble the masses and to call them to battle upon a broad economic issue. But as soon as the struggle became political in character, it passed beyond the possibility of trade union direction. Such a struggle demanded a single unified direction and movement, with a single aim, a clearness of objective and outlook parallel to that of the Government, and a readiness to lead in every field of the struggle. But such a lead can only be the lead of a political party. The Labour Party, however, could not provide such a political leadership required, not only because the existing leadership of the Labour Party is rotten to the core with reformism and parliamentarism and therefore incapable of giving any leadership to the class struggle of the workers save to betray it, but also because the Labour Party itself is a loose federal body of exactly parallel character to the trade unions, and therefore incapable of uniform centralised direction. Only a centralised revolutionary political party can have the necessary unity, concentration, single aim and rapid adaptation to all the needs of the struggle. This iron necessity to the working class of a revolutionary political party to lead their struggle is a central lesson of the present crisis for the whole English Working-Class Movement. It is the central need for the trade unions at the present stage. Only a mass Communist Party, acting in conjunction with the trade unions as the mass organisations of the workers, can lead the whole working class to victory.

The general strike of 1926 and its collapse leaves the working class confronted with urgent tasks.

First, the fight against reaction; against the attack on the trade unions and on organisation rights; against the attack on wages and hours (in which the miners are still bearing the brunt

of the combat); against the attack on the militant workers; to rally the working class and re-form the front.

Second, the fight against the disintegration of the Working-class Movement, desertion of the unions, breaking up of the front, splits and exclusions; instead to show the way forward for the revolutionary workers to fight for the leadership, and on this basis to recruit for the unions and for 100 per cent. trade unionism.

Third, the fight against the reformist leaders responsible for the collapse of 1926; refusal to allow the episode to be covered in oblivion; relentless exposure of their rôle, and analysis of the lessons of the struggle; fight to drive them out of the Working-Class Movement, and to win revolutionary leadership in the movement.

Fourth, the fight to drive home the lessons for the future from the struggle of 1926: the exposure of bourgeois democracy, the exposure of the rôle of the bourgeois State, the necessity of the political struggle for power, the inevitability of the armed struggle.

Fifth, the fight for the unification of the working-class ranks, both through the combination of the trade unions, the concentration of power in the hands of the General Council, and also above all through the development of factory organisation and the formation of factory committees.

Sixth, the fight for preparation to meet the new conditions of the struggle and for the new methods required: in particular, for the organisation of Workers' Defence Corps directly under the auspices of the trade unions, and for the institution of working-class propaganda from the whole organised Working-Class Movement to the army, navy and air force.

Seventh, in conjunction with all this, and most important of all, the fight for the mass Communist Party as the sole means to establish the new revolutionary leadership in the English Working-Class Movement.

The Social Basis of Fascism in Italy

I WOULD like to make one preliminary observation. It has become a fashion to employ the term "Fascism" in quite a general manner and sometimes to use it for very varied forms of bourgeois reactionary movements. This may be useful for agitational objects, but there is no doubt whatsoever that it is harmful for the clear and precise understanding of facts. Amongst the movements which have been labelled " Fascist " in various countries it is undoubtedly possible to find certain points of similarity, and in order to depict the present world situation it is useful to try to throw light on these points of similarity. But in my opinion an analysis directed at discovering in each of these movements the particular factor distinguishing it from all the others is much more important. In any case such analysis should certainly precede all generalisations. For example, errors have been made in the tactics of our Party through our having attributed to the term " Fascism " a too general and too abstract meaning, and through our not having made an effort at political and social analysis to determine what really is, in a given country and in a given situation, the movement to which this name is to be attributed.

Fascism is an extra-parliamentary form of bourgeois reaction. Fascism is a form of defence of the capitalist order against the menace of the proletarian revolution. On these points there is no difference of opinion. But what form of defence, what kind of reaction? Here one cannot argue schematically and be content with generalities. It is necessary to make a careful analysis of the facts, without pretending that the way they are presented in the given country should serve as an absolute model for all times and all places, but with the sole intention of establishing certain fundamental points and above all of showing that a similar investigation should be conducted for every country if we want to arrive at any valuable results in general.

I.

It is impossible to define Italian Fascism from the social

standpoint by referring to one single class. For instance the affirmation with which many are satisfied, that Fascism is a movement of the petty bourgeoisie, is quite inadequate. The petty bourgeoisie is not a homogeneous class. It is composed of strata widely differing from one another but with one thing in common, the fact that they occupy an intermediary position between the industrial bourgeoisie and big landowners on the one hand and the proletariat on the other. Certain consequences arise from this common feature which are at the same time common to all petty bourgeois strata, and the tendency of the petty bourgeoisie to vacillate between the two fundamental classes into which capitalist society is divided is essentially connected with this fact. The origin of the Fascist movement in Italy, its development up to the conquest of power, and the subsequent consolidation of the Fascist regime cannot be examined and understood except in relation to this vacillation.

An examination of Fascism from the outside brings one face to face with contradictions which seem very difficult to explain. In the programme approved by the first Fascist Congress, for example, one can find statements and demands that are definitely anti-capitalist. There was talk in this programme of a tax on capital aimed at expropriating large-scale property. Subsequently, in 1920, Fascism made a gesture of sympathy towards the movement for the occupation of the factories by the workers. To-day, on the contrary, the Fascist regime is a regime that assures the dictatorship of big finance capital over the whole of Italian society. These manifest contradictions cannot be reconciled except as phases in a developing process which is determined on the one hand by a series of vacillations of the petty bourgeois strata, and on the other hand by a manœuvre of the big bourgeoisie and the large landowners to profit by these vacillations in order to conduct an irreconcilable struggle against the Labour movement.

The essential thing, therefore, in order to understand how Fascism came into power in Italy and became consolidated, is to understand these vacillations and these manœuvres.

2.

In chronological order, but not in order of importance, the first element that must be taken into consideration is the ex-soldiers' movement which came into being immediately

after the war, with the petty bourgeois outlook common to the various discharged soldiers' associations formed at that time. This ex-servicemen's movement developed chiefly in the towns and was the rallying point of an urban petty bourgeoisie, which was a new class partly formed during the economic development preceding the war, but mainly dating from the years of the war and immedately after it.

The most prominent factor in this new intermediary class consisted of the younger men, who had acquired during the war the conviction that they had the right to occupy a higher position than hitherto in society and civil life. The old ruling classes had to resort to these elements when the masses were mobilised in the army; mobilisation provoked a profound change in the traditional structure of the Italian army. Before the war the higher ranks of the army had been constituted from a very narrow circle of officials, representing the old agrarian and semi-feudal rural classes but devoid of any prestige as leaders. The subaltern ranks were completely bureaucratised, and were also unable to impose discipline upon the masses of backward peasants who had to be mobilised for the war.

The whole army had to be reorganised in the middle of the war by the elimination of a large section of the upper ranks and the formation of an intermediary stratum of new subalterns. The first contact between the new urban petty bourgeoisie and the peasants was made in this manner. It was a contact between those who were in command and those who had to obey blindly. This fact played no small role in the subsequent development of Fascism.

When the war ended what was the desire of these people, who had now acquired the habit of commanding? Nothing less than to continue to command. On the basis of this very simple programme it was easy to rally large numbers of discharged officers and non-commissioned officers, discontented people unsuited for productive labour but convinced that they had special rights from the fact that they "had done their bit during the war."

The difficulty which all these people encountered in fitting themselves in the framework of the old traditional ruling classes made the problem more acute. The new urban petty bourgeoisie became an element of great social disharmony because it was the rallying centre of elements that are perturbed, desperate, greedy for power and pleasure, devoid of

any political and moral training, a prey to all the passions which are let loose during a great social upheaval. It is quite easy to understand how a White Guard can be recruited amongst such elements. But equally comprehensible is the fact that for a certain period of time this intermediary class follows, if not with sympathy, at least with curiosity and at times benevolent expectation, the development of the proletarian offensive against bourgeois society.

In reality a marked " anti-capitalist " spirit was fairly widespread in its ranks. It was quite a peculiar form of anti-capitalism, but evident traces of it are to be found in the whole policy of urban Fascism in the early days and even in the actions and slogans of Mussolini.

The new petty bourgeoisie is anti-capitalist in the sense that it desires to combat certain forms of capitalism that it considers parasitical. But at the same time it exalts the capitalist economic system, *i.e.*, the regime of " economic freedom," of private initiative and competition, because it maintains that this regime leads to a maximum development of individual energy, of the spirit of initiative and individuality.

The idea that this petty bourgeoisie has of capitalism is essentially a romantic one. The ideal of the petty bourgeois is to be a " captain of industry," a creator of wealth by personal effort, and, in the field of the technique and organisation of production, a conqueror of new worlds for humanity. It is evident that there is at least an anachronism here! There is no longer any room for economic romanticism in the period of imperialism. Finance capital has killed the " captain of industry." The figure of the entrepreneur who contributes to the success of the economic enterprises by his spirit of individual initiative, and by his technical and organisational capacity, gives way before the anonymous investor of capital and the stock exchanger manipulator. It is interesting to observe how this return to a mentality peculiar to " nascent capitalism " becomes manifest in the urban petty bourgeoisie just at the time when capitalism, in order to overcome the post-war crisis, has to resort in Italy as everywhere to the maximum concentration of its forces, and when finance capital is establishing its sovereignty.

While the development of Fascism proceeded along the lines of its original programme and of the mentality of its first town nuclei, a conflict between Fascism and the economic

groups fighting to concentrate in their hands control of the whole industry of the country was inevitable. It was necessary for the new urban petty bourgeoisie to incline definitely towards the ruling classes—big industry, finance and landed property—so that Fascism could find its way. Another factor intervened to provoke this tendencey—the reaction of the agrarian classes against the trade union movement of the agricultural labourers, led by the Socialist organisations.

3.

The reaction of the big agrarian proprietors against the agricultural workers' movement had a decisive significance in determining the development of Fascism. This was the factor which first and foremost contributed to make Fascism become a movement of armed direct action against the organisations and gains of the workers.

It should be mentioned, however, that the reaction of the agrarians was to a large extent evoked by the very methods with which the struggle against the landowners, above all in the valley of the river Po, was led by the class organisations of the agricultural workers. These organisations pursued rather peculiar tactics. Their leaders operated on the Right Wing of the Labour movement and of the Socialist Party. They sharply rejected any revolutionary programme, or revolutionary tactics whatsoever. They were in favour of gradualness. Many of them were even in favour of collaborating in a bourgeois parliamentary government. But they led the activity of the agricultural masses in such a way that practically speaking it amounted to the employment of violence against the possessing classes. It was not a question of revolutionary violence that could be considered as a point of departure for the struggle for power, but simply of "trade union" violence. The economic demands of the agricultural proletariat were conceived in a Maximalist spirit. It was therefore a question of demands which in practice amounted to seriously jeopardising not only the integrity of the landowners' profits, but the very right to own property, on which ever stricter limits were being placed. The owners were deprived of their freedom to choose the labour power they would employ. Some owners had the amount of labour that they had to engage imposed on them; they were compelled to use a certain number of machines, and use only machines owned by definite organisations of farm labourers, and so forth. All

this was enforced under penalty of various " taxes," boycotts, etc. These sanctions were fixed by the actual agreements that the proprietors had to sign under pressure of violent and stormy strikes.

Finally, a perfect organisation, which started with the farm labourers and in some places extended to the intermediate categories of semi-farmers and tenant farmers, gave the organisation the appearance and force of a new power in formation; the State and the proprietors were in no way disposed to support this power which was endeavouring to legalise by contracts the incursions it had made into the sphere of private property.

It is obvious that such a situation could not last for long. A modification or even a considerable limitation of property relations could not be obtained in this manner. Not " contract and trade union violence," but the violence of the revolution and the force of the workers' State are necessary to make such changes possible and guarantee them. Because the leaders of the agrarian trade union movement did not want to hear any talk of revolution or of the struggle for the conquest of power, the situation was bound to go to the other extreme, *i.e.*, sharp, violent, non-legal reaction of the landowners for the defence of their property rights. This is how the first centres of an anti-proletarian terroristic organisation sprung up in some agrarian districts of the Po valley, where the agricultural labourers' organisations were most highly developed and where the inherent contradictions in their leaders' methods were therefore also developed to the maximum degree. The first Fascist legions were formed, the first punitive expeditions were sent out. On the initiative of the landowners' organisations of Emilia a centre of armed reaction was created which subsequently was to spread throughout the whole of Italy.

But the offensive of the landowners also enjoyed special conditions which favoured the development of local organisations of combat, side by side with the large-scale Fascist legions organised by the landowners' associations. After the war there was a phenomenon in many rural centres analogous to that which was to be seen in the towns, *i.e.*, the formation of a new petty bourgeoisie. The rise in prices of agricultural products permitted an accumulation of savings in the hands of the intermediate categories of " colonists," tenant and semi-farmers, etc.

In this manner a tumultuous movement for the acquisition of land was created, an aspiration which came up against the policy conducted in the countryside by the class organisations of the landworkers led by the Socialists. Instead of conducting a policy of alliance with this new agrarian middle class in formation, making its land hunger a weapon in the struggle against the big proprietors, the Socialist leaders of the landworkers' unions strongly opposed the idea of creating a new class of petty proprietors.

"The land should be socialised, and not divided up," said these people. "To fight against the big proprietors you should not endeavour to become proprietors on your own, but should become assimilated to the proletariat and have demands and a basic programme of Socialisation in common with the workers."

In the districts where the Socialist organisations were not strong, the transfer of land took place all the same; many holdings were sold, thus forming a new strata of rural petty bourgeoisie.

Where the Socialist organisations were strong and dominant great discontent was created, which was destined to explode at the first opportunity and made the rural petty bourgeoisie an ally of the agrarians in the struggle against the proletariat. Fascism—as the reformists themselves now acknowledge—in these places represented a real outburst of the oppressed middle classes.

4.

However, the collaboration of the various elements indicated in a reactionary offensive against the Labour movement was not obtained easily. The Fascist movement had to pass through various crises before assuming a definite physiognomy. In 1921 for instance, a lively and widespread discussion developed within the Fascist movement which took the form of a rebellion of the urban middle classes against the specifically reactionary form that the movement was beginning to assume under pressure of the agrarian Fascist aggression. During this discussion one could even read articles by Fascist leaders in which it was maintained that Fascism, in forming itself into a party, should become "a middle party at an equal distance from the Socialists and Populists and from the plutocracy and big capitalists." A split between the urban and the rural elements seemed imminent several times, and

the ability of the Fascist chief, Mussolini, was shown in his manœuvring to prevent the split, making concessions first to one side and then to the other, agitating with demagogic slogans (such as that of the struggle against the monarchy) in order to appease the urban nuclei, but never declaring himself against the rural armed-force movement which aimed simply at subjecting the agricultural masses to a regime of White Terror in order to restore unlimited rights of ownership. As a result of this policy this second element was in reality of predominant importance in determining the development of the entire Fascist movement.

This state of affairs was also helped by the pressure brought to bear on the urban nuclei by a section of industrial capitalists who urged them to extend to the towns, against the workers, the same terroristic tactics that had been employed so successfully in the countryside.

There was an immediate reflection of these social contradictions in the years 1919 and 1920 in the very manner in which the Fascist movement was organised. In the countryside the armed-force policy held sway uncontested. The leaders of the terrorist detachments were at the same time leaders of the local Fascio. There did not exist, side by side with the fighting detachments, any Fascist assemblies in which the masses could participate to discuss problems and elect their leaders. The whole organisation was formed on a strictly military basis. The mass elements which adhered to the movement, either voluntarily or under constraint were enrolled like soldiers and submitted to discipline but had no influence in the choice of leaders or the direction of the movement. The leaders and the leadership were established in reality by the headquarters of the reactionary proprietors' organisations.

In the towns, however, the matter was more complicated. A military nucleus existed around which were rallied the elements which had decided on an armed struggle against the workers. These elements constituted the " Desperate " deachments. But side by side with these detachments there were also the associate members' assemblies in which the petty bourgeoisie often prevailed over the representatives of the openly reactionary classes. Sometimes conflicts arose, but these were nearly always settled by the victory of the " Desperates." The amalgamation of the agrarian terrorist elements and the " Desperate " detachments of the towns was then completed and became the decisive political factor.

Another symptom of the complexity of the situation in this early period of the history of Fascism is seen in the fact that when Fascism had scarcely developed, a group of deputies was nevertheless formed in parliament, representing the interest of the big landowners. This meant that the old rural ruling classes, while making use of the new weapon of terrorist pressure, did not lose their autonomy, but kept their freedom in political manœuvring.

How Fascism, starting from such a heterogeneous and complicated social basis, arrived at the conquest and consolidation of power, cannot be understood except in relation to another element of the situation, *i.e.*, the forms assumed in the years 1919 and 1922 by the crisis in the Italian State.

5.

The crisis that the Italian State went through from 1919 to 1922 was probably much more profound than the crises undergone by any other European State. It was a crisis which, arising from an economic system ruined by the war and incapable of satisfying the needs of the population, shook the whole political superstructure until its collapse was inevitable and imminent. I think it will suffice to indicate two main factors :—

1. Commencement of the realisation of an effective alliance between the working class and the peasantry.
2. The bankruptcy of the old ruling classes.

In a country like Italy, where the majority of the toiling population consists of agricultural workers and peasants, it is evident that an alliance could not be realised between the workers and peasants without an immediate revolutionary situation arising. And vice versa, every time that one of the two classes begins to move and openly takes the field against the State, the other will also be set in motion, and the ruling classes will immediately have to try to prevent the ties between the workers and peasants acquiring a permanent, stable and secure nature. One might say that the whole history of the Italian Labour movement has proved the truth of this assertion. The moulding of the class consciousness of the industrial proletariat and of a will to rebel against the State amongst the poor and middle peasants, proceed along two parallel lines. All radical progress of the workers is followed or accompanied by a move to the Left on the part of the peasants. And this happens to a certain degree even without

the unification of the two movements under the leadership of an organised and conscious revolutionary vanguard.

Before the war, for example, the first stirring of the tide of the Labour movement, which swept over Northern Italy in the last decade of the XIX century, was contemporary with the insurrection of the Sicilian peasants against the State. After the war, with the masses of the peasantry awakened to political life by the war itself, the unification began to assume general forms. Corresponding with the wave of unemployment that swept over the industrial districts, there was a mass movement in the countryside for the occupation of the land by the poor peasants. It is true that the peasants who participated in this movement were not clearly conscious of the aims they wanted to arrive at. They saw the land and the proprietors, but did not perceive the State that defended these. They invaded the land, carrying portraits of the king, the national banner, and crucifixes at the head of their processions. But it is no less true that objectively this was a revolutionary factor of first importance, against which the ruling classes had to concentrate their forces if they were to preserve power.

What was the policy of the Italian ruling classes in the past? It was a policy of compromise and conciliation conducted with the object of maintaining the domination of a reactionary oligarchy. First of all compromise was arrived at between the industrialists and the agrarians. In other countries these two groups, in the early periods of capitalist development, have carried on serious conflicts amongst themselves, and the proletariat has profited by this struggle to win political liberty. In our country this struggle was non-existent, and therefore the winning of political liberty was also mainly an illusion.

In exchange for the support given to the industrialists, the agrarians obtained the right to submit the peasants to a regime of semi-feudal exploitation and oppression, which attained humiliating and incredible forms of ferocity. Not long before the war, in certain districts of Venetia, the poor peasants were compelled to conduct grape-picking with a muzzle on, so that they could not eat the signor's harvest. The peasant attempts at revolt were systematically suppressed by the armed force of the police.

A complete tactic of compromise, negotiation and cor-

ruption was also adopted by the ruling classes in respect of the Labour movement. They tried to make it deviate from the line of the class struggle by satisfying the sectional aspirations of certain more advanced categories from the reformist petty bourgeoisie who had taken the lead in the Labour movement. This tactic was considered by the petty bourgeoisie to be a " Left " tactic. But in reality it was nothing more than a rather clever tactic of class preservation. On the one hand it hindered the linking up of the Labour movement with a peasant insurrection, while on the other it tended gradually to lead the Labour movement towards becoming incorporated in the framework of the bourgeois State.

But after the war when new millions of workers entered the arena these tactics, which had been useful when manœuvring with small groups, were also destined to fail. The failure of these tactics led to the disintegration of the ruling classes, who found it quite impossible to hold up the development of the two great mass parties, the Socialist Party (workers, agricultural labourers, urban petty-bourgeoisie) and the Popular Party (artisans, middle peasants, rural bourgeoisie) which in the post-war period found conditions favouring a rapid development. The collaboration of the Popular Party in the Government only accentuated the problem of satisfying the masses of peasants, whose class appetites and interests had been awakened but not assuaged. The attempt to draw the Socialists into collaboration also failed because of the very manner in which it was conceived, *i.e.*, as an attempt to bring the " *whole* " of the Socialist Party into the Government, in order to make prisoners of the masses adhering to it. After the revolutionary experiences in 1919 and 1920 of hundreds of thousands of workers it would be absurd to think of the realisation of such a plan. First the Leghorn split (1921), then the split at Rome (1922) proved that a few leaders might have been taken into the Government but that the masses would not have allowed themselves to become captives of the bourgeois State by following these leaders.

This failure of the old ruling classes became most clearly manifest in 1921 and 1922 during a series of insoluble parliamentary crises. And it is in this year that Fascism began to take a definite shape. The direct tie uniting it with the reactionary landowners made it the most appropriate weapon for dealing a decisive blow to prevent the realisation of the workers' and peasants' alliance. The bankruptcy of the old ruling classes at the same time confronted it with another

definite aim : that of realising a new unity of the bourgeois forces, and, at their head, to enforce a programme of defence and preservation of the threatened capitalist order.

That explains on the one hand the fact that all representatives of the old ruling classes looked with favour on the development of the Fascist movement, supplying it with arms and placing the whole State apparatus at its disposal, while at the same time it explains how Fascism was able to conceive its programme of conquering the State in spite of the ruling classes that had nourished and protected it.

E. ERCOLI.

The Situation in China

SINCE the end of last December the military situation in Northern and Central China has changed; the reactionary militarist Chang-Tso-Lin, who was then on the verge of final defeat and was preparing to fly to Japan, has once more been "stabilised," to use the favourite phrase of to-day. Later, in an offensive against the National Armies (or People's Armies) he has compelled them to abandon Tientsin and Peking.

While Chang-Tso-Lin's forces were recovering, the other big general of Central China, Wu-Pei-Fu, re-entered the arena of war and politics.

A section of this general's army had been smashed and another section had betrayed him in the autumn of 1924, when he was at war with Chang-Tso-Lin. As a result of the struggle between Chang-Tso-Lin and the National Armies, it was possible for Wu-Pei-Fu to recover his strength.

At present Wu-Pei-Fu is the military head of the Honan, Chihli, and Hupei Provinces, which have a population of about 100 millions, whilst the advance units of his troops are within a few hours' journey of the Chinese capital, Peking. This powerful general is again dreaming of seizing central power and of uniting China by a military dictatorship. But Chang-Tso-Lin is also striving for this; in comparison with last summer, he has lost military influence in almost all the seaboard provinces of China proper, though at the end of last December he once more came over to the south of the Great Chinese Wall (into China proper) beyond Shan-hai-kwan (a little seaport town where the great wall begins).

The National Army, numbering nearly 100,000 men, is sufficiently strong to fight against either of these two militarists separately, but not both of them together; it was therefore compelled to beat a temporary retreat and quit the theatre of military activities. It retreated to the other side of the Nankow Pass, a few score miles distant from Peking.

The first National Army was able to remain in Peking and district more than a month after it had been compelled to abandon Tientsin; it was also able to evacuate Peking, and take up its present advantageous strategic position without a struggle. This was only possible because of the antagonism between Chang-Tso-Lin and Wu-Pei-Fu, an antagonism which as yet, however, has not been strong enough to compel Wu-Pei-Fu to enter into an alliance with the National Armies against Chang-Tso-Lin.

There is no doubt at all but that with the evacuation of the National Armies from Peking the Chinese capital has once more become a bone of contention, and possibly in the near future will be the cockpit of a struggle between Chang and Wu.

The imperialist governments and the entire imperialist press are now drawing conclusions favourable to themselves from the new situation. They are rejoicing over the "smash-up" of the National Armies, and are planning a general offensive against the Chinese movement for emancipation. The intentions and hopes of the imperialists are discussed openly in the Far Eastern foreign press and in a more veiled way in the "interested" imperialist countries themselves.

In a leading article in the London "Times" of March 24th, the picture of the approaching political reaction in China is painted with a sigh of great relief. The writer enumerates the failures of the National Armies, noting with satisfaction the effect on the Chinese Government of the joint ultimatum of the imperialists at the commencement of March, rejoices over the shooting of a delegation from public organisations on March 18th in Peking during its protest against the afore-mentioned ultimatum, builds high hopes on a rupture between the nationalist movement in China and the U.S.S.R., and finally divulges the latent desires and hopes of the Anglo-Japanese Imperialists for a close alliance between Chang-Tso-Lin and Wu-Pei-Fu in the struggle against the movement for the liberation of China and against the U.S.S.R. But towards the end of the article the writer nevertheless displays certain doubts and warns British public opinion not to indulge in excessive optimism.

I apologise in advance to the readers and the editors of the "Communist International" for the fact that I am compelled to quote in full the concluding part of this article; the ideas here expounded should be of undoubted interest to all

who want to get an understanding of the present situation in China :

" But while there are elements of hope in the general Chinese situation, it would be in the highest degree unwise to count upon any early pacification of the country. Wu and Chang have fought one another before and may fight again. Feng and his allies have sustained no crushing disaster. At Canton the militant strikers' organisation seems still under Soviet control. Revolutionary Communism is, it is said, entirely alien to the traditions and to the temperament of the educated Chinese. This may be true enough, but do the Chinese masses, for all their endurance and passivity, differ so much from other men as to be totally unaffected by revolutionary promptings sown in the fertile soil of grinding poverty, of general insecurity, and of increasing unemployment?

" Even if there are faint indications of daylight, the immediate future in China is still uncertain. From a sea of prophecies and conjectures emerge a few reefs of grim and forbidding fact. Vast areas in Northern China have been plagued by a civil war waged by military chiefs for their own enrichment and aggrandisement. Their armies are largely recruited from peasants who have been rendered homeless by previous wars and can only make a living as mercenaries. While they prey on the countryside, their leaders blackmail the cities and commerce of rich provinces. For treaties with foreign nations and for the treaty-rights of foreign residents they care nothing. The compliance of both the army leaders and of the Chinese Government with the recent ultimatum suggests that the Powers have everything to gain by combined action in the defence of such legitimate foreign interests in China. Till recently they have been reluctant to take even the most obvious steps to protect them. Fear of arousing Chinese national sentiment and of thus playing into the hands of the Bolshevists may have contributed to this reluctance; there may also have been occasions in China when a narrow view of national interest was an obstacle to any fruitful international co-operation. Now that international action has been taken, and so far from increasing the difficulties of the fluid situation has actually lessened them, it is to be hoped that the interested Powers, and more especially *His Majesty's Government*, will profit by the lesson. Outside Canton, and even to some extent in Canton itself, the realities of civil war and hard financial facts have opened the eyes of many Chinese nationalists to the inopportuneness, to say the least, of the

ultra-nationalist agitation which was so violent last year. Is it, therefore, still as impossible as it was then alleged to be to combine an energetic defence of British rights and interests, which the Chinese Government has recognised, with the fullest respect for the nationalist aspirations of the new China?"

This leading article of the " Times " is certainly right to express all these doubts. The contradictions between Wu-Pei-Fu and Chang-Tso-Lin do indeed still exist; the working masses are still continually becoming more revolutionary; and the " narrow path of national interests " of the Chinese people is still an " obstacle to international collaboration." But there is yet another reason for the doubts of the writer of this article. This lies in the conflicting interest of America on the one hand and the Anglo-Japanese bloc on the other.

We must be fair to the " Times " leader-writer. Better than any of the " Marxists " of the Second International, he divines with class instinct the main reasons which prevent the imperialists from suppressing the revolutionary movement in China and forming a military dictatorship.

Military collisions between Wu-Pei-Fu and Chang-Tso-Lin are inevitable; no temporary armed armistice can avert this struggle. Of course it is not really a question of Chang-Tso-Lin and Wu-Pei-Fu being old enemies since the spring of 1920, after they had jointly smashed the army of the Japanese puppet, little Su. The same causes which led to the struggle of Chang-Tso-Lin and Wu-Pei-Fu against Su continue to exist, and now urge them on to a struggle against one another.

Chinese Unity.

Under what conditions would the unity of the militarists in the North of China be possible? In other words, under what conditions would it be possible to establish a military dictatorship, supported by foreign imperialists and leading to the unification of China from above by the armed force of the militarists? For this there must be two basic conditions in China at the present time; the first is a Chinese bourgeoisie so mature that it could unite the country with the aid of one of the military leaders or an alliance of the chief militarists; and the second condition is that the imperialists should really form a united front, not only with regard to the struggle against the movement for liberation, but also on the question of a government for China.

One need be no great authority on China to know that

the Chinese bourgeoisie is still very young, that it does not yet feel itself united on a nation-wide scale. The interests of the Chinese industrialists and the upper stata of the commercial bourgeoisie are still to a large extent confined to the spheres of influence held by the various imperialist countries in China. One could not say, for instance, that the interests of the bourgeoisie of Manchuria and those of the bourgeoisie of the large seaport towns and districts such as Shanghai and Canton, or those of the industrial bourgeoisie in the Hupei Province, coincide exactly. Besides this it should be realised that the districts ruled by the Chinese militarists who are fighting amongst themselves represent whole countries, with populations up to 100 millions.

Since the Chinese bourgeoisie has not matured far enough to make its aspirations for the unity of the country the dominant factor in the political life of China, the struggle between Chang-Tso-Lin and Wu-Pei-Fu, or other generals, cannot be regarded as expressing now to a greater extent than formerly a tendency towards centralisation on the part of the Chinese bourgeoisie.

On the contrary, the struggle between Chang-Tso-Lin, Wu-Pei-Fu, Sun-Chuan-Fan and other less important generals, should be regarded as a struggle between separate militarist groupings, which continue to exist because of the scattered nature of the bourgeoisie and peasant masses and of the support given to these groups by the imperialists.

But, nevertheless, the historical necessity for stopping the internecine war in China still exists. The unification of China is dictated by the interests of all strata of the population including the bourgeoisie, which suffers in no less degree from the native militarists than from the unequal treaties foisted on China by the imperialists.

The kernel of the whole question is first : towards what sort of unity is China tending, and secondly what forces will unite the country ?

Here a proviso should be made from the very start that although the Chinese bourgeoisie as a whole is not closely interested in the unity of China, it is at any rate not interested in the wars between the militarists. Therefore the interpretation of the struggle taking place between Chang and Wu by certain students of Chinese affairs, as due to the con-

tradictory interests of the Manchurian and Yang-si-kiang valley bourgeoisie is absolutely incorrect.

We consider both interpretations of the struggle of the militarists incorrect—that according to which it is the direct expression of the tendencies among the Chinese bourgeoisie working towards unity, and that acording to which it is a reflection of the conflicting interests of different sections of the Chinese bourgeoisie.

The Chinese bourgeoisie as a whole is *in the main interested in a stable power defending its interests* on a district scale in several provinces. China could already now be schematically divided up into economically "self-contained" groups of provinces: Manchuria, the North-Western, the South-Western and the South-Eastern. It stands to reason, however, that this tendency indicates a future federation of China which can only be achieved in stages through the struggle for unification of the entire country.

What forces can unite and federalise China?

Apparently not the militarist cliques, who do not represent the interests of the Chinese bourgeoisie. They are independent groups with feudal princes at their head, fighting for territory with the object of increasing their armies and obtaining new sources of income by the plunder of the population. Unification and federation of China will take place from below as a result of the revolutionising of the masses and the growth and formation of the working class. The experience of Canton undoubtedly sheds light on the future path of development of the struggle of the Chinese people for freedom, and shows how, in our epoch of social revolutions, the oppressed masses of the East will build up their power in the period of the transition from feudalism.

We will now turn to the other reason which prevents the imperialists from forming a military dictatorship in China uniting the country under the power of foreign imperialism. This is the insurmountable conflict of the interests of the imperialists themselves.

American capitalism, which began an energetic advance in the Far East after the World War, came directly into hostile relations with Japan, which had succeeded in strengthening its influence in China to such an extent since 1915 that by the end of the World War it had the hegemony

of the exploitation of China. Great Britain had an agreement with Japan dating from 1902, and during the European War entrusted Japan with the duty of defending British interests in the Far East. But Britain was compelled after the Versailles Treaty to make concessions to America at the expense of Japan and China.

The war of the Chihli cliques (Chang-Tso-Lin and Wu-Pei-Fu) in 1920 against the Anfu group, which then held the Central Chinese Government in its hands, amounted in the long run to a struggle against Japanese interests in China. The defeat of little Su, leader of the Anfu party, meant the defeat of Japan in China for the first time after many years of steady entrenchment. The Washington Conference, besides its other " accomplishments " furnished legal formulæ for Japan's defeat: the Japanese had to quit the Shantung Province, leave the port of Tsindao and lose influence over the Central Government of China. Besides this, during the Washington Conference in 1922, owing to the pressure of America, the Anglo-Japanese Treaty which expired at that time was not renewed.

Between 1922 and 1924 rivalry was in process between Japan and America, Great Britain supporting the former, although against her own will. In the middle of 1923 Anglo-American influence prevailed over the Central Government of China. This position continued until the autumn of 1924. In the autumn of that year, Wu-Pei-Fu, who was closely linked with the British and the Americans, suffered defeat at the hands of Chang-Tso-Lin, who had been allied to Japanese imperialists since the spring of 1920. Japanese influence is increasing once again, and simultaneously with this the conflicting interests between her and America become more profound. The events of the summer of 1925, the unprecedented élan of the movement for liberation and the appearance of the National Armies on the political arena, confused the imperialist plans for a certain time. They did not decide on open intervention, but they could not make concessions to the national movement, and for several months past they have waited and vacillated.

They waited to see how things would turn out. But at the end of the summer of 1925 Japan had once more become a factor to be counted with before any other, and had concentrated all her forces on assisting the counter-revolution which has its centre in Mukden. The American and British imperialists, especially the latter, helped her in this, under-

standing the danger threatening imperialism in the event of a victory of the revolutionary movement.

From the moment of the retreat of the National Armies and the new advance of Chang-Tso-Lin on Peking, the influence of Japan in China has been growing once again. When the National Army was first in difficulties, a number of ministers in the Tuan-Tsi-Jui Government of non-Japanese orientation were kicked out and replaced by members of the Anfu "Club." With the further advance of Chang-Tso-Lin, the influence of Japan also grew. Great Britain, who is most interested in the suppression of the movement for freedom in China, and is striving to overthrow the Canton Government, prefers the temporary strengthening of Japan to the worse alternative of a success of the revolutionary movement. Great Britain really desires to form, together with Japan, an alliance between Chang-Tso-Lin and Wu-Pei-Fu. But Wu-Pei-Fu and Chang-Tso-Lin, especially the former, are not simply marionettes in the hands of the imperialists. Their struggle against the revolutionary masses of China, while aiding the imperialists, is also subject to its own "Chinese logic." Secondly, America while not interfering directly in military matters in China will do everything possible to prevent the further strengthening of Japan. The contradictions between America and Japan (and also Great Britain) have become especially acute now, after the retreat of the National Armies and the return to power of Tuan-Tsi-Jui with the support of Chang-Tso-Lin.

Thus the formation of a military dictatorship in China out of the main militarist forces, as planned by Japan and Great Britain, is encountering insurmountable obstacles, both in the internal Chinese situation and because of the antagonism between the imperialists.

But we will not run too far ahead. These are future problems, coming up when a new situation arises in China in connection with Chang-Tso-Lin's entry into Peking.

Before making a retrospective analysis of the events in China preceding the latest reactionary offensive, we think it necessary to refer to yet another source hostile to us, and very similar to the "Times" in its estimation of the situation in China.

In the Austrian Social Democratic organ "Arbeiter Zeitung" of March 30th, Herr Otto Bauer, on the basis of British telegrams from China, hastens to draw the conclusion

that the Chinese Revolution has been suppressed and that 1849 has already been reached in that country. This well-know theoretician of the Second International, as far as we know wrote nothing during 1925 about the Chinese 1848. He was the author of the Resolution on the Eastern problem at the Second International Congress in Marseilles, but he did not say a single word to the Social Democratic workers about the revolution in China. He hastens now to inform the world of the advent of a phase of counter-revolution in China.

" Judging by information coming, it is true, from an inspired British source in Canton, which has up to now served as the main stronghold of the Kuomintang, the nationalist party, a change of forces has taken place. Their general, Chang-Kai-Cheng has seized power into his hands; it is possible that he has overthrown the government, but there is no doubt that he has suppressed by force, not stopping at bloodshed, the wing of the Kuomintang sympathising with the Bolsheviks. Whether Chang-Kai-Cheng is an ally of the ' allies ' and a weapon of the allied generals is not yet clear; but there is already no doubt that the new rulers of Canton are negotiating with the British to end the boycott, which, starting in Canton, spread successfully over the whole of Southern China and dealt a heavy blow to British trade in Hong-Kong. All these symptoms testify to one thing : the Chinese national revolutionary movement, both in the North and in the South, has been dealt a heavy blow. China, which last year experienced its 1848, is now experiencing 1849."

Thus on the basis of a communication about the retreat of the National Armies to the North, and about an alleged *coup d'état* in Canton, Otto Bauer, with an air of deep sympathy for the Chinese people, records the advent of 1849 in China and now appeals to the international proletariat " to fulfil their duty in respect to the Chinese Revolution : to prevent the intervention of foreign capitalism, in accordance with its strength." " China's 1848 was a prelude to the struggle with European capitalism. But we will not permit China's 1848 to serve as a pretext for European capitalism to defile the corpse of the temporarily strangled revolution " cries Herr Otto Bauer.

Otto Bauer will probably be extremely astonished when he finds out from the latest telegraphic communications from China that the Canton Government not only is not overthrown, but is extending its influence also over the neighbouring provinces. He will be confounded when he learns that the large province of Honan is now uniting with Canton,

and that the general Chang-Hen-Di, a reactionary supporter of Wu-Pei-Fu, has been driven out of this province.

As we see, the arguments of Otto Bauer, based on " inspired sources," have no significance whatsoever in the estimation of the real situation in China. But the object of this kind of article and its political meaning is quite clear : to weaken the will of the international proletariat and its desire to aid the movement for freedom in China. A " corpse of the revolution " has no need for any aid, one can only take off one's hat and pay homage to the dead.

So in estimating the situation in China there is only a very insignificant difference between the " Times " and Otto Bauer. This difference consists in the fact that the direct ideologists of imperialism, like sober men of affairs, see more difficulties ahead than do their voluntary henchmen of the Second International. For Otto Bauer it is an unavoidable historic fact, an immutable law that the Chinese bourgeoisie with the aid of the militarists and foreign " civilised " capitalism must come into power. It is no business of theirs if facts prove the contrary, that the temporary victory of reaction in the North affects less than one half the country, that simultaneously with the entry of Chang-Tso-Lin into Peking a federation around Canton is being formed in the South, that in the South-Eastern provinces since the victory of Chang-Tso-Lin, General Sun-Chuan-Fang has suddenly commenced a struggle against Chang throughout the Shantung Province, and finally, that behind the lines of Wu-Pei-Fu and Chang-Tso-Lin, as they move forward towards Peking, a peasant movement has started which, pushing forward over the railway region towards the centre of the workers' and peasants' revolutionary movement, may solve the question of State power in China in quite another manner than the " Times " and Otto Bauer prophesy. All these things are no business of Otto Bauer's. He repeats like an old parrot : " China was once feudal, there was a great revolutionary movement in China last year, it has now suffered defeat, the bourgeoisie has come out victorious and will come into power with the aid of the big militarists."

The coming year will show that the revolution in China not only has not ended, but is only commencing.

The National Armies and the Liberation Movement.

The National Armies, headed by Feng-Yu-Hsiang, became an independent military grouping only at the commencement of 1925, shortly after the autumn defeat of Wu-Pei-Fu, with whom they fought against Chang-Tso-Lin and

whom they " betrayed " at the last minute. Until the commencement of 1925 the army of Feng-Yu-Hsiang and the armies of the two generals Hu-Din-I and Sung-Yo (situated then in the Chihli, Honan and Shan-Si Provinces) were not called National Armies and were not connected with the movement for Chinese liberation. But individual prominent members of Kuomintang had for a long time had connections with, and to a certain extent had influenced the ideas of varous units in the armies of these generals, since the time of the 1911 revolution. The end of 1924 and the beginning of 1925 was a period of national enthusiasm in China, which at the close of last year developed into a powerful anti-imperialist movement. This movement acquired a militant and consistently national revolutionary nature due to the fact that in the large seaport towns the working class took an important part in it and in certain places was its advance guard.

A most characteristic symptom of the rising nationalist movement in China was the appearance, as the result of the defeat of Wu-Pei-Fu in autumn, 1924, of the leader of the Kuomintang Party, Dr. Sun-Yat-Sen in the political arena of Northern China for the first time since the Chinese Revolution in 1911.

Why did Chinese opinion, the vast masses of the people, consider the defeat of Wu-Pei-Fu in the autumn of 1924 favourable for the development of the struggle for freedom, in spite of the fact that the victor was another militarist, Chang-Tso-Lin ?

This is easily explained. In the middle of 1923, when Wu-Pei-Fu with the collaboration of the British and American governments gave Tsao-Kun the presidential chair (in China people said that America spent several million dollars on this) the Chinese bourgeoisie and democratic strata of the population felt that things were tending towards the establishment of a military dictatorship, supported by foreign capital. The struggle against Wu-Pei-Fu in 1924 was therefore regarded by Chinese public opinion practically a struggle for liberation. That alone is why the Kuomintang Party, which until that time had been almost exclusively confined to Southern China, supported Chang-Tso-Lin against Wu-Pei-Fu although the former was manifestly a protegé of Japan.

The Kuomintang Party, headed by Sun-Yat-Sen, understood very well that to defeat Wu-Pei-Fu at that time meant upsetting the plans of the Anglo-American imperialists,

weakening their apparatus and to a certain extent intensifying the antagonism amongst them. They also understood that Japan isolated from America and Great Britain represented a lesser danger for China than did the other imperialists, and that Chang-Tso-Lin supported by Japan could not establish a strong military dictatorship in the country. Sun-Yat-Sen and the Kuomintang also quite correctly assumed that the defeat of Wu-Pei-Fu would not give a complete victory to Chang-Tso-Lin, but would open up new possibilities by unleashing the energy of the national struggle.

As a matter of fact the defeat of Wu-Pei-Fu in the autumn of 1924 helped very greatly in the development of the struggle for the liberation of China. The political reaction raging in the country during 1923 and 1924 (the notorious shooting of striking workers on the Peking-Hangkow Railway, the hounding down of Communists and members of the Kuomintang in the summer of 1924, the military expedition prepared against China) ended with the defeat of Wu-Pei-Fu. Following this there started a phase of workers' strikes in the large seaport towns throughout the country. Even the Japanese imperialists were compelled to seek an alliance with the public organisations of China. This latter fact explains among other things, the famous invitation to Sun-Yat-Sen from Japanese statesmen, to visit Tokio on the way from Canton to Peking. The arrival of Sun-Yat-Sen in Peking together with a group of prominent members of the Kuomintang stimulated the revolutionary movement in the North still more.

Indeed, after this, on the background of the political events sketched here, the army of Feng-Yu-Hsiang and other generals began to link up with the national movement in China.

In the subsequent stages of this rapprochement there arose a number of obstacles and antagonisms. The Shanghai events and the later developments of the struggle played a tremendous role in bringing the national armies nearer to the Kuomintang. Feng-Yu-Hsiang understood from the very commencement that for him to declare his loyalty to the struggle for freedom would give his army a position incomparably more advantageous than that of the other armies. In the summer of last year Feng made a few public announcements in which, expressing his sympathy for the students and workers, he declared his readiness to carry on an armed fight against the British imperialists. His declaration was of

special value after the notorious interview given by Chang-Tso-Lin in which the latter spoke of the necessity for a " strong man " who with the aid of foreign powers would put an end to the " Red danger " in China and establish " strict order."

Of course the declaration of Feng-Yu-Hsiang, who was the leader of a big army, could not remain mere words. His statements created a corresponding spirit in the army. The generals, officers and also the soldiers under his command understood that the army of Feng-Yu-Hsiang undertook an obligation towards the people, gave them promise of support. The more the national movement developed and the more difficult the position of Chang-Tso-Lin became within China on account of this, in particular in the districts of Shanghai and Nanking, the better became the position of the National Armies.

Almost simultaneously with the extension of the struggle in Shanghai and other centres in the country and its transformation into a struggle against the Chinese militarists, it became possible for the former supporter of Wu-Pei-Fu, General Sun-Chuan-Fang, to operate from the town of Hang-chow in the Che-Kiang Province against the troops of Shin-Si-Ling, Chang-Tso-Lin's puppet in Shanghai. This action of Sun-Chuan-Fang meant the commencement of a new phase of the civil war in China after 1924.

The Chinese Communist Party and the Kuomintang understood that if the army of Chang-Tso-Lin was not smashed, the imperialists would strangle the Chinese revolution by means of it. Sun-Chuan-Fang's operations were met sympathetically by almost all strata of the population in the districts occupied by Chang-Tso-Lin's troops in China proper, and also regarded with approval by the Kuomintang and the Communists. The rapid success of Sun-Chuan-Fang, who within two weeks drove the Chang-Tso-Lin armies from the provinces of Kiangsu and Shantung, may to a large degree be explained by the hatred of the people for Chang-Tso-Lin. Since the first defeat of Chang-Tso-Lin at the end of last summer a new revival of the movement for emancipation in Northern China set in. The situation became more and more favourable for an offensive of the National Armies against Chang-Tso-Lin. It was felt in the country that the National Armies were growing more and more into a military and political factor of importance, whilst the growth was in direct proportion to the decline of Chang-Tso-Lin's authority.

At that time Wu-Pei-Fu was only just commencing to stir again, but after the repeated retreats of Chang-Tso-Lin he began to acquire more political weight in the country. Through his satellites—big officials—Wu-Pei-Fu began a political campaign in Peking and Tientsin against the government of Tuan-Tsi-Jui. Wu-Pei-Fu, who at that time had command only over a few thousand soldiers and did not control a single big town, did not directly embroil himself in the civil war nor become an open supporter of any of the opposing sides. He was neutral in respect to the military activities and preferred to act independently politically. His first activity against the Government was the campaign against the payment of the Boxer debt to the French in *Gold Francs*. But this also was not a campaign, but simply a denunciation of the Government after a *fait accompli*.

Wu-Pei-Fu's second act was in connection with the Customs Conference summoned in October at Peking. Properly speaking, Wu-Pei-Fu was not opposed to the imperialist conference in itself, but was opposed to Tuan-Tsi-Jui and Chang-Tso-Lin being granted a loan as a result of it.

Under the banner of a struggle against the Government of Tuan-Tsi-Jui and against the imperialist customs conference, Wu-Pei-Fu restored his former authority and collected new forces. But he not only restored his position in this manner, he also applied " Political " measures. General Syao-Yao-Nang of the Hupei province, who had been in Hangkow for a long time under Wu-Pei-Fu until the defeat of the latter in 1924, became a fairly important independent force in 1925. He gave shelter to Wu-Pei-Fu after his defeat, but did not allow him to enter Hangkow. Early last winter Syao-Yao-Nang died suddenly. The Chinese press considered that he had been poisoned. Wu-Pei-Fu seized power in Hangkow and " suddenly " became the head of a considerable army and owner of large sources of income.

Meanwhile, the National Armies, after the operations of Sun-Chuan-Fang, were still in such a position that they did not represent a single entity. The first National Army was partly in the North-Western part of the Chihli Province and partly in the districts of Inner Mongolia. It was directly under the command of Feng-Yu-Hsiang. The second National Army was in the Honan Province under Yo-Vei-Tsuin, while the third was in the province of Shan-Si and commanded by Sun-Yo. Owing to the fact that the three National Armies were not subjected to a single command, they could not follow up and exploit the retreat that had then been begun by Chang-Tso-Lin.

The second National Army hesitated to attack Chang-Tso-Lin's vassal in the Shantung Province, fearing an attack in the rear by Wu-Pei-Fu, while the first Army, preparing for a general struggle against the main forces of Chang-Tso-Lin (which were then situated along the Peking-Mukden Railway and in the district of Shekhe in Inner Mongolia), considered it expedient to commence the struggle before clearing the Shantung province. The third National Army, however, could not move out of its own province of Shan-Si nearer to the arena of the coming military struggle, until the second National Army had advanced northwards.

While the commands of the three National Armies were arguing and bargaining about the question of acting against Chang-Tso-Lin, the latter succeeded in withdrawing his troops and shortening his line of defence.

In the autumn the political life of the country was governed by expectations of the coming civil war. Chang-Tso-Lin was preparing feverishly. The Japanese and the British aided him in every way. The National Armies were also preparing in a military respect, but were considerably poorer both in arms and in material resources than Chang-Tso-Lin.

The national-revolutionary struggle at that time centred around two important political problems—in the South the necessity of accomplishing victoriously the boycott of Hong-Kong, and in the North of concluding the Customs Conference in the interest of the Chinese people .

The government of Tuan-Tsi-Jui played a treacherous role in the solution of both these problems. It maintained contact with the counter-revolutionary General, Chang-Tsun-Ming, who had been driven out of Canton, but with the aid of British money was attempting to organise a new military expedition against Canton. The Tuan-Tsi-Jui government sent its representatives to the British imperialists at Hong-Kong in order to conduct disintegrating work there against Canton. In regard to the tariff conference this government conducted such a suspicious policy that the national press shouted about the danger of Tuan-Tsi-Jui and Chang-Tso-Lin receiving large bribes in the form of a loan.

The situation in the country was ripe for the overthrow of the central government. But at this time there was no political party in the country which was a real force capable of doing this.

Almost all strata of the population expected this political act on the part of the National Armies, especially the first Army. The merchants, urban petty-bourgeoisie, and artisans were interested in this, not to mention the workers and revolutionary students. The masses generally awaited this.

Such a situation is very characteristic of the present stage of the revolutionary movement in China : the revolutionary forces are still not sufficiently strong *to overthrow directly by a rising the military cliques, and form a democratic government, yet they are sufficiently strong to create a political situation whereby with a comparatively small military force it is possible to fight against an incomparably stronger enemy with prospects of victory.*

The Mistake of the National Armies.

The National Armies, however, did not sufficiently comprehend the significance of the political struggle against their enemies, and could not decide in time to overthrow Tuan-Tsi-Jui. They hoped to do so only *after* the victory over Chang-Tso-Lin. In exactly the same way Feng-Yu-Hsiang hoped to *declare his political programme only after the defeat of Chang-Tso-Lin.* Feng and the National Armies, not understanding the significance of the political struggle, devoted all their attention exclusively to military-technical and strategical questions.

The Kuomintang party and the Communists warned the National Armies long before the development of military activities, requesting them to declare their political platform to the people and thereby further the success of the struggle against Chang-Tso-Lin. The National Armies did not consider it possible to do this. They remained primarily merely military groupings. Their leaders, headed by Feng, did not understand the whole tremendous significance of the political struggle.

In its manifesto to the workers and to the masses in general, the Chinese Communist Party, in the autumn of last year before military activities commenced between the National Armies and Chang-Tso-Lin, made the following statement :—

" Despite the hatread of the masses for the Chang-Tso-Lin cut-throats, despite the ever-growing military forces selected against him in Central and Southern parts of China

—victory over him, the definite destruction of the counter-revolutionary nest at Mukden demands a most tremendous concentration of the forces of the entire country. For, besides plundering tremendous funds from the peoples of Manchuria, Chihli and Inner Mongolia, he is receiving, and will continue to receive aid from the imperialists. They will provide him not only with money, but also with arms and means of transportation. All those who are longing for the liberation of the country from the imperialist yoke should know this and understand it. But the whole population of the country should also know that the independence and unity of the country cannot be obtained until the most malicious enemy of the Chinese people, the betrayer of their interests, Chang-Tso-Lin be destroyed.

"Therefore, all forces must be organised in preparing to maintain a struggle with a strong enemy who has for allies the rich imperialists of Japan, Great Britain and other countries.

"The National Armies should understand that their allies should be the whole toiling Chinese people, and that the sympathy of the whole people during the coming civil war should help them onward.

"To attain this the leaders of the National Armies should first form a really single front against the enemy, and secondly they should declare their political platform to the people. They should prove that they stand for a national revolutionary power which will conduct a struggle for liberation against the imperialists and complete the revolution of 1911."

While demanding political activities from the leaders of the National Armies, the Chinese Communist Party and Kuomintang knew very well that the latter would not decide on such activities, not only because they do not understand their significance for the mobilisation of public opinion on the side of the National Armies, but also because they were afraid of the wild agitation against them which the imperialists and counter-revolutionary militarists were developing in China. The imperialists were labelling the National Armies as Bolshevik; this frightened the Chinese bourgeoisie and prompted Chang-Tso-Lin to use it for his slogan.

The latter actually made his watchword in the war against the National Armies "the struggle against the Red danger in China." But while taking account of this imperialist manœuvre, we should recognise that the Communists were nevertheless right when they demanded that the National Armies should declare their democratic platform and make it known to the entire people. For the silence of Feng-Yu-Hsiang and the other leaders was interpreted by the imperialists as an "adroit political move," while the broad masses were compelled to become more and more cautious of the National Armies. The silence of Feng, and in particular his stubborn silence during the preparation for the military struggle against Chang-Tso-Lin, also created a certain enmity towards him amongst the leaders of the Second and Third Armies, who frequently accused him of indecision and shuffling.

At any rate a definite change in public opinion in respect to Feng-Yu-Hsiang and the National Armies was already to be felt in China in October and November of last year. This was because the people—intellectuals, merchants, and workers—observed the strategic and diplomatic moves of Feng, saw how he tried to create the impression that he did not intend to fight Chang-Tso-Lin, understood that he was doing this in order to place the responsibility for beginning the struggle on Chang-Tso-Lin, and possibly even in order to miss the opportunity so that Chang-Tso-Lin and Wu-Pei-Fu would come into collision with one another. But the masses of the people, observing all this, did not hear any statement from Feng as to what he intended in a political respect. Therefore they began to think that Feng was conducting the old policy of strengthening his military power, and that his aim lay in that alone.

We consider that one of the causes of Feng's subsequent defeat was his policy of silence. Not only did it help to isolate the National Armies from the people of the country in general, but it had also a bad effect on the morale of the army itself.

For this reason the National Armies could not make enough out of the revolt of Go-Sun-Ling, who commanded the best part of Chang-Tso-Lin's army. This revolt, which in the third week of December brought Chang-Tso-Lin's armies to the verge of destruction, ended in the execution of Go-Sun-Ling and was the beginning of the defeat of the

National Armies. The archives of the Japanese General Staff probably contain very interesting material as to the skilled work in the way of espionage and provocation done during that week or two amongst the units in revolt. But there is also no doubt that the suppression of the rising, and the rescue of Chang-Tso-Lin by the Japanese imperialists, was possible because at this time the National Armies were already considerably weaker morally (as a result of their erroneous policy) than they had been formerly.

The suppression of the Go-Sun-Ling rebellion not only gave wing to the hopes of Chang-Tso-Lin, but greatly increased the resistance of the other big generals who also supported Mukden—Li-Tso-Ling in Tientsin and Chang-Tsung-Chang in the Shantung province. Both these generals who were ready to flee at the time of the rising, commenced an offensive after its suppression. *The seizure of Tientsin by the National Armies in January of this year was in reality only a measure of defence.* A few weeks of struggle for Tientsin showed that the Second and Third Armies were extremely weak also as regards fighting capacity. The First National Army, after the Second National Army had left the Honan Province, was left confronted with the united forces of the Mukdenites headed by Chang-Tso-Lin and the growing forces of Wu-Pei-Fu.

Thus the retreat of the National Armies was actually pre-determined in January, and their departure first from Tientsin and later from Peking during March and the beginning of April was really only a retreat and not destruction as a result of military defeats.

The First National Army both in preparing for the struggle with Chang-Tso-Lin in the autumn of last year and also in its retreat from Tientsin and Peking endeavoured to manœuvre in order to gain time and play for a clash between Chang-Tso-Lin and Wu-Pei-Fu.

The manœuvre did not succeed, and the First National Army retreated without fighting to the other side of the Nankow Pass, half a day's journey from Peking.

When the advanced units of the National Army were still in Peking, Wu-Pei-Fu, while making overtures to its command, evidently intended to get into such a position that it would come into collision with Chang-Tso-Lin and would be

so smashed up by the latter as to cease to play any considerable role in the country. But the National Army succeeded in extricating itself from the dangerous position in time. The imperialists and the Tuan-Tsi-Jui government, during the period when the National Army was in Peking, also endeavoured to lower it in the eyes of the Chinese public. The shooting of the peaceful delegation protesting against the imperialist ultimatum was provoked by the Tuan-Tsi-Jui government just for this object. The disarmament of the Tuan-Tsi-Jui body-guard and arrest (technically unsuccessful) of the supreme ruler himself was the reply of the First National Army to the government's action. Thus this bloody manœuvre of the imperialist gentlemen and their puppet, Tuan-Tsi-Jui, not only proved unsuccessful, but rather helped to increase the moral authority of the National Army .

What are the immediate political perspectives in China?

It would be impossible to reply to this question without taking into consideration the present condition of the Kuomintang, the position in Southern China where the neighbouring provinces are commencing to group themselves around the Canton Government, without taking account of the development of the peasant movement and finally without taking stock of the military situation in the South-Eastern part of China right up to the Shantung province. But while leaving these questions as a theme for a future article, one may say in respect to Northern and Central China : the occupation of Peking by Chang-Tso-Lin's Army and the return of Tuan-Tsi-Jui to power has not created a basis for a protracted armed peace between Chang-Tso-Lin and Wu-Pei-Fu.

The National Armies which are not far from Peking, will, it is true, serve as a restraining factor in a struggle between Chang-Tso-Lin and Wu-Pei-Fu. Wu-Pei-Fu not only sympathises with Chang-Tso-Lin against the National Army, but even incites him to this struggle. Whilst on the contrary Chang-Tso-Lin is ready to give Wu-Pei-Fu the chance of undertaking the next offensive against the National Army. Each of them counts on weakening the other in this way. Therefore these manœuvres should not be considered as the beginning of a lengthy union ; they merely postpone the moment of the clash between them. But the postponement of the clash between Chang-Tso-Lin and Wu-Pei-Fu does not weaken the contradictions between them ; it increases their antagonisms. At the same time the antagonisms between

America and Japan will also hinder any lengthy stabilisation of Chang-Tso-Lin and of the new government.

General Sun-Chuan-Fang, the former supporter of Wu-Pei-Fu, and one of the most prominent heads of the Chihli clique, is at present a big military force. When he tries to seize the Shantung province he will inevitably enter into conflict with Chang-Tso-Lin. The increasingly clear tendency in South-West China towards the formation of a Federation with Canton as a centre will shortly commence to play a considerable role in weakening reaction in the North. It should not be forgotten that the population in the orbit of the group of South-Western provinces and Sun-Chuan-Fang represents practically one half of China.

Thus, the plans of the Anglo-Japanese imperialists for the formation of a military dictatorship capable of subjecting China to the reactionary power of Chang-Tso-Lin will meet with no less success than did plans of this kind which the Anglo-American imperialists centred around Wu-Pei-Fu in 1923.

April 21st, 1926. G. VOITINSKY.

New Economic Policy of British Imperialism.

Its Effects on Indian Nationalism.

BOURGEOIS nationalism of India has ended in a complete compromise with imperialism, as was predicted by those who judged the situation with Marxian realism. Class antagonism developed side by side with national antagonism inside the post-war period of the Indian Nationalist Movement. At last the former became predominant over the latter. The process of class-differentiation inside the Nationalist ranks caused constant regrouping in the political sphere. The tendency was toward the formation of a bourgeois bloc of constitutional opposition. Imperialism helped this tendency very cleverly and successfully with the policy of "Economic Concession and Political Repression." This move toward the Right—toward compromise with imperialism—was marked by two very distinct stages: first, divorce of the bourgeois Nationalist Movement from the most revolutionary social forces—workers and peasants; second, the schism between the big bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. The first was accomplished in 1922, when the programme of mass passive resistance to imperialism was abandoned in favour of parliamentary obstruction. The organisation of the Swaraj Party marked the separation of the Nationalist movement from revolutionary mass actions. By the end of 1925 the schism between the big bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie became wide enough to split the Swaraj Party, which for two years had served the purpose of a bridge between the constitutionalism of the big bourgeoisie and revolutionary inclinations of the petty bourgeoisie. The split in the Swaraj Party means the burning of that bridge; consequently the last obstacle to a happy compromise between the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism, of course under the leadership of the latter, is removed.

The desire for this compromise is not one-sided. British ·rialism is very desirous to stabilise the economic and ·al situation in India. It has long been recognised by ·ng imperialist statesmen that a country like India ɔe kept long in subjugation without the active and .upport of an influential section of the native popula-

tion. In other words, imperialism must have a special basis in India. Until the earlier years of the twentieth century British imperialism in India relied upon two native factors: one positive, the other negative. The first was the loyalty of the reactionary landed aristocracy which had been partly created and partly foisted up by the British conqueror. The second was the passivity of the masses. Relying on these two factors, British imperialism could afford to ignore the feeble demands of the rising bourgeoisie and the revolutionary dissatisfaction growing among the petty intellectuals. Besides, until the World War, the economics of imperialism demanded that India (as well as other colonial countries) should be held back in a state of industrial backwardness in order to supply the market and raw materials to the metropolitan industries. Consequently, the relation between imperialism and the colonial bourgeoisie was that of antagonism. This antagonism found its expression in the Nationalist movement. But there was another economic consideration which made the nationalism of the Indian bourgeoisie weak and compromising even in those days. Owing to the forced industrial backwardness of the country, the Indian bourgeoisie was mostly engaged in trade which was dependent upon British imperialism both politically and economically. Politically, because security and expansion of trade required a stable government and order in the country, which conditions had been fulfilled by the British; economically, because both the export and import trade being practically a British monopoly, the Indians engaged in it were economic vassals of imperialism. The Nationalist Movement, inspired and headed by such a weak social class, did not disturb imperialism. The terrorist secret societies, through which the growing discontent of the unemployed and unemployable petty intellectuals was spasmodically expressed, could be dealt with successfully by brutal repression. The situation remained more or less like this till the eve of the World War. Soon after the outbreak of the world conflagration, it became evident that British domination in India could no longer be maintained on the old narrow social basis. The social basis of British rule could be widened and deepened only by drawing at least the upper strata of the Nationalist bourgeoisie within the economic orbit of imperialism. This necessitated a change in the economic policy of imperialism. Still another factor contributed to that change and precipitated it. The exigencies of war obliged Britain to relax her grip on the economic life of India. Thus began the new era which was characterised by Britain's desire to come to an agreement with the Indian bourgeoisie.

All along the grievance of the Indian bourgeoisie had been that the British government impeded industrial development of India. The two main planks in the Nationalist platform were fiscal autonomy and progressive advance towards self-government. The demand for fiscal autonomy grew energetic in proportion to the accumulation of capital in the hands of the Indian bourgeoisie. The phenomenal growth of British trade with India unavoidably caused a proportionate accumulation of capital in the hands of those Indians who were connected with that prosperous trade. The following table shows the growth of India's foreign trade since the beginning of the twentieth century, in rupees:

FOREIGN TRADE

(0,000,000 are omitted).

Quinquennial Average.	Export.	Import.	Excess Export.
1874-79	63	38	25
1879-84	79	59	20
1884-89	88	61	27
1889-94	104	71	33
1894-99	107	74	33
1899-04	122	85	37
1904-09	144	103	41
Annual Average.			
1909-10	188	122	66
1910-11	209	133	76
1911-12	228	144	84
1912-13	246	166	80
1913-14	249	191	58

It will be noticed that the characteristic of this large volume of trade has always been a considerable excess of export over import. In countries in a normal economic (capitalist) condition, such a continual favourable balance of trade indicates a state of "national prosperity." But in India the ever upward bent of the line of excess of export indicates just the opposite. The part of the commodities exported, that was not covered by imports, did not go to create credit in favour of India. The surplus Indian export represented mostly the tribute to imperialism, a part being appropriated by the native trading bourgeoisie in a manner to be explained presently.

The continuous excess of export over import indicated that the Indian peasantry was terribly exploited. Even now nearly 70 per cent. of India's exports are raw materials and foodstuffs. Before the war the proportion was greater. Im-

ports are mostly manufactured goods. The comparative smallness of their volume shows the strict limitation of the buying capacity of the Indian masses. The latter produced and was obliged to give up much more than they could get in return. The trade balance in favour of India was divided between British imperialism and Indian traders. A portion of the surplus exports was paid up by the import of gold and silver, which was mostly absorbed by the upper classes of Indian society. The remaining went to the account of liquidating India's obligations to England for the benefit of British rule.

The following table shows how the value of excess export was divided up till the war :

Rupees (0,000,000 are omitted).

Quinquennial Average.	Excess Export.	Treasure Imported.	Spent to liquidate obligations in Britain.
1874-79	25	10	15
1879-84	20	12	8
1884-89	27	13	14
1889-94	33	14	19
1894-99	33	8	25
1899-04	37	14	23
1904-09	41	22	19
Annual Average.			
1909-10	66	31	35
1910-11	76	32	44
1911-12	84	49	35
1912-13	80	51	29
1913-14	58	37	21

NOTE : The tables are compiled from the figures in the Government Statistical abstract; round numbers approximating the exact value are used.

Thus the proportion of the surplus value extracted from the Indian masses, appropriated by the Indian bourgeoisie, during the period 1874-1914, in terms of money amounted to 6,710 million rupees, approximately. This wealth could not be converted into capital sufficiently profitably by investment in land and trade—two main avenues of exploitation open to the Indian bourgeoisie. The search for more lucrative industrial outlet became ever more persistent and crystalised in the demand for fiscal autonomy.

It is unmistakable—and therein lies the germ of sub-

sequent compromise with imperialism—that the political plank of the Nationalist platform was not half as strong as the economic one of fiscal autonomy. What is meant by fiscal autonomy? It means that India should be autonomous (of Britain) in her financial and trade operations. It is evident that the autonomy in financial and commercial spheres cannot be effective without a simultaneous political economy. So long as Britain remains the dominating political force—the State power—in India, she will not permit the Indian bourgeoisie to readjust the financial and trade relations in a way harmful to her interest. But, significantly enough, the nationalism of the Indian bourgeoisie never demanded political freedom—it does not do so even now.

Subsequent events have proved that by fiscal autonomy the Indian bourgeoisie meant a wider latitude to exploit Indian labour by converting their accumulated wealth into industrial capital. In course of time they appreciated the impossibility of realising even that much economic freedom without some political power. In 1915, as condition for India's full support to Britain in carrying on the war to victory, the Nationalist bourgeoisie demanded self-government (within the Empire) and immediate grant of fiscal autonomy. Imperialism could no longer remain indifferent to that demand made in a very critical moment. The first step towards agreement was taken, to be followed by others in quick succession.

As a matter of fact, additional and unexpected events had already given rise among the imperialist statesmen, a tendency towards an agreement with the Indian bourgeoisie even before the latter definitely formulated their attitude in 1916. The then Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, in a despatch to the Secretary of State for India in the latter part of 1915, recommended the policy of fostering the industrial growth of India. He wrote :—

> " It is becoming increasingly clear that a definite and self-conscious policy of improving the industrial capabilities of India will have to be pursued after the war, unless she is to become more and more a dumping ground for the manufactures of other nations. . . . . The attitude of the Indian public towards this important question is unanimous, and cannot be left out of account. . . . . After the war, India will consider herself entitled to demand the utmost help which her government can afford to enable her to take her place, so far as cir-

cumstances permit, as a manufacturing country."—(Lord Hardinge's despatch to the Secretary for India in 1915.)

Acting on this recommendation of the Viceroy, and in order to meet the demands of the Nationalist bourgeoisie, the British Government set up the Indian Industrial Commission "to examine and report upon the possibilities of further industrial development in India." A Nationalist leader and three foremost Indian capitalists sat on the Commission with representatives of imperialism. After two years of exhaustive investigation into the sources of capital, raw material, market and labour, the Commission recommended, among other subsidiary things :

1. That in future the government must play an active part in the industrial development of the country ;

2. That India produces all the raw materials necessary for the requirements of a modern community, but is unable to manufacture many of the articles and materials essential alike in times of peace and war. Therefore it is vital for the government to ensure the establishment in India of those industries whose absence exposes us to grave danger in the event of war ;

3. That modern methods should be introduced in agriculture so that labour now wastefully employed would be set free for industries ;

4. That the policy of *laissez faire* in industrial affairs, to which the government clung so long, should be abandoned ;

5. That the establishment of Industrial Banks should be encouraged by means of government financing if necessary ;

6. That the necessity of securing the economic safety of the country and the inability of the people to secure it without the co-operation of the government, are apparent. Therefore the government must adopt a policy of energetic intervention in industrial affairs.

While the Commission was still carrying on its investigation, practical effect was given to the recommendations that it made subsequently. In 1917, the Indian Munitions Board was created "to develop Indian resources to meet the necessities of war and the situation created by the war." The (English) Chairman of the Industrial Commission, who had

always been an advocate of the point of view that industrial development of India would strengthen the basis of imperialism, became the head of that newly-created State organ which gave a tremendous impetus to Indian industry. The Munition Board worked on the following lines:—

1. Direct purchases in India of articles and materials of all kinds needed for the army, the civil departments, and railways;

2. The diversion of all orders for articles and materials from the United Kingdom and elsewhere to the manufacturers in India;

3. The giving of assistance to individuals and firms in order to establish new industries or develop old ones.

The result was reflected in the increased share of manufactured articles in export trade from 24 per cent. to 31 per cent., reached in two years. Besides, orders for large transport and military supplies were placed with Indian manufacturers, who were given State aid to fulfil the orders. The growth of the Tata Iron and Steel Company (Indian) is indicative of the situation in general:—

	Tons		
Year.	Pig Iron.	Steel.	Steel Rails.
1915	154,509	66,603	45,639
1917	167,870	114,027	72,670
1918	198,064	130,043	71,096
1919	232,368	134,061	70,969

The net profit was as follows:—

1915	Rupees	2,805,000
1916		5,103,000
1917		7,927,500
1918		7,900,000

The next step towards agreement was the scheme of constitutional reforms prepared jointly by the Secretary of State for India, Montagu, and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford. They proposed to give the Indian bourgeoisie and higher intellectuals a share in the legislative and administrative authority of the country. The main features of the Reforms were:—

1. Modification of the control of the Indian Government by the British Parliament;

2. Creation of central and provincial legislatures with an elected majority;

3. Extension of the franchise to include the entire bourgeoisie and the upper strata of the petty bourgeoisie;

4. Increase of the number of Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council (Government) and appointment of Indian Ministers to the Provincial Governors in addition to Executive Councillors (both English and Indian);

5. Transfer of local self-government to the Indians;

6. Opening of the higher positions in civil services to Indians, etc., etc.

These political reforms (essentially very inadequate) together with the recognition of the right of Indian capital, fully satisfied the Indian bourgeoisie. On the economic aspect, the Commission on Constitutional Reform expressed the following opinion :—

> "As the desirability of industrial expansion became clearer, the Government of India fully shared the desire of the Indian leaders to secure the economic advantages that would follow the local manufacture of raw products. English theories as to the appropriate limits of the State's activity are inapplicable to India. We believe that this is true in case of industries, and that if the resources of the country are to be developed, the Government must take action."

It is to be clearly noticed that the concessions made were not forced by the demand of the Indian bourgeoisie alone. Two other factors of very great importance asserted themselves on the situation. They were :—

1. The exigencies of the war, and

2. The necessity of widening the social basis of imperialism. Still another factor came into play subsequently. That was the crisis of world capitalism caused by the war.

Towards the close of the world war the negative factor—passivity of the masses—upon which British rule in India had relied, almost disappeared. In spite of the maturing

rapprochement between imperialism and the Nationalist bourgeoisie, the country was in a state of revolt. The necessity of widening and deepening the social basis of the British rule in India by winning over the native bourgeoisie become imperative. The Reform Act of 1919 was passed by the British Parliament to meet the situation. But the first great revolutionary expression of Indian nationalism could not be altogether suffocated by an Act of Parliament. A few years of disturbance were to follow. The revolutionary upheaval of 1919-22, however, did not hinder the process of agreement. On the contrary, the fear of a revolution drove the Indian bourgeoisie to the arms of imperialism.

The appearance of tremendous revolutionary forces on the scene encouraged the petty-bourgeoisie, whose position would be scarcely improved by the Reforms, to oppose the reforms. Even a section of the bourgeoisie joined that opposition. But the policy of steady economic concession to the Indian bourgeoisie followed by imperialism, in course of time, knocked the bottom out of the opposition, which took the form of boycott of the reformed legislatures. It may once more be emphasised that the policy of concession was forced upon imperialism by two considerations entirely independent of the demand of the Indian bourgeoisie. They were :—

1. To enlist the services of the Nationalist bourgeoisie in the attempt to suppress the revolutionary uprising of the Indian masses for freedom, and

2. To overcome the post-war crisis of capitalism by creating new markets and tapping the sources of cheap labour.

As a further encouragement to the process of Indian industrialisation, in December, 1919, the Government moved a resolution in the Legislative Assembly, appointing a commission to give practical shape to the recommendation of the Indian Commission. The Resolution says :—

"The most obvious and direct form of assistance which the Government can give to the industries of the country is by the purchase of supplies required for the public services so far as possible in the country itself."

Referring to the cause and consequences of the establishment of the Indian Stores Department, the British Trade Commission in India wrote :—

"In the first place, both the Indian and also the non-official European members of the Legislature are determined that, in future, all purchases of stores for Government requirements shall be made in India, and that all tenders shall be called for in India and in rupees. These claims have been met by the Government of India to some extent. The revised Stores Rules permit the newly-organised Indian Stores Department at Delhi-Simla to purchase almost unlimited quantities from stocks held in India or in the course of shipment. They also sanction purchases of machinery and plant from the Indian plant of British manufacturers or from their technical agents. There seems to be little doubt that the new Indian Stores Department will rapidly increase in importance, and that the centres of purchasing influence, so far as imported stores are concerned, will be transferred from London to India."

Already, in 1918, the Government had declared that they would place the order for 3,000 railway waggons with Indian manufacturers annually for ten years, provided that the prices were not higher than the prices at which waggons could be imported from other countries. A contract was made with the Tata Company for the supply of 20,000 tons of steel rails annually for three years. Another contract was made with the same firm for the supply of 10,000 tons of steel plates annually for a period of ten years. The Budget of 1922-23 allotted 1,500,000,000 rupees for the rehabilitation of the railways. On the motion of Sir Vithaldas Thakersey, a leading Indian industrialist and financier, the Legislative Assembly passed a resolution appointing a committee to investigate "what steps should be taken by the Government of India to encourage the establishment of the necessary industries so that as large an amount as possible of the railway rehabilitation allotment be spent in India."

In its report the Railway Committee cited the instances of the failure of Indian manufactures to successfully compete with the manufacturers of other countries. Consequently the opinion of the Committee was "that industries newly started in India for the manufacture of railway materials of a fabricated character cannot, in the initial stage, compete *without assistance* against established industries abroad." As a logical consequence of this admission, the Legislative Assembly passed a Bill in June, 1924, granting bounty on the manufacture of railway waggons in India until the year 1929.

All these measures were heading towards Protectionism

—the *summum bonum* of Indian Nationalist demand. To the dissatisfaction of the Indian bourgeoisie, the Industrial Commission of 1916 had been precluded from touching the tariff question. Naturally, British imperialism was very reluctant to equip the Indian bourgeoisie with a weapon that could eventually be turned against it. But events were moving fast. The decision to purchase railway material, structural steel, etc., manufactured in India when the amount manufactured could obviously not supply the demand, was an invitation for British capital to build industries in India. The concession to the Indian bourgeoisie was incidental. The process of accumulation of capital in the industries in Britain was on the decline; if British capital could not find other sources of investment which would lead to accumulation to make up for the decline at home, the post-war crisis of British imperialism would be decidedly fatal. Further, the Indian market was rapidly ceasing to be a British monopoly. It was invaded from all sides—United States, Japan, Germany, and Belgium taking the lead. The following tables show the situation as regards iron and steel trades :—

Steel Imported.

	1914.	1922.	
Britain	59.8 per cent.	45.7 per cent.	of total import.
Belgium	17.0 per cent.	30.7 per cent.	,,
U. S. A.	2.2 per cent.	13.7 per cent.	,,

Even Germany, which had been totally eliminated from the Indian market up till 1920, recovered her position by 1922 to the extent of 12 per cent. of the total import.

Iron Bars and Channels in tons.

	1920.	1922.
Britain	77,726	17,616
Germany	9,743	38,404
Belgium	39,580	113,116

The textile market, which had absorbed over 30 per cent. of British export to India, was seriously cut into by Japan. The following figures illustrate the situation :—

Pounds of Yarn Imported.

	Britain.	Japan.
1922-23	31,018,372	26,546,905
1923-24	24,789,923	20,430,025
1924-25	20,759,078	32,324,773

In the first quarter of 1925, Japanese import was

16,160,285 pounds as against 4,861,775 pounds from England. As regards woven goods, particularly of the finer varieties, Lancashire was still resisting the competition. But over 60 per cent. of India's textile demands consist of cheap rough stuff, owing to the low standard of living of the people. Ever increasing quantities of yarn of the lower counts, imported from Japan, would be woven in the Indian mills and drive the Lancashire cloth out of the Indian market. The consideration of this eventuality induced the Lancashire mill-owners, just recently, to come to an agreement with the Indian manufacturers by acquiescing to the abolition of the Excise Duty on the Indian cotton industry.

The greatest proportion of the 1,500,000,000 rupees allotted (in 1921) for the rehabilitation of railways was spent in England, but in the teeth of persistent Indian demand that supplies for Indian railways should be bought in the cheapest market. Eventually Indian orders would go to other countries by the sheer law of competition (the basic principle of capitalist economy), unless Britain permitted India herself to supply them.

British manufacturers were being dislodged approximately at the corresponding rate from other Eastern markets. To manufacture in India was the best counter-action. Cheap labour, raw materials, and great saving on the cost of transport, taken together, would enable the British capitalists not only to hold their own in the Eastern market; the enormous profit made would also enable them to tide over the industrial crisis at home.

Soon after the conclusion of the war, a series of iron and steel manufacturing companies were registered in India, all connected with British firms. The principal ones were :—

1. Indian Iron and Steel Company, Ltd., capital Rs.5,000,000. Registered in 1918. Projected production 180,000 tons of pig iron a year. Promoted by Burn and Co., a British engineering and shipbuilding firm in India.

2. The United Steel Corporation of Asia, Ltd. Capital, Rs.150,000,000. Registered in 1921. Projected annual production, 300,000 tons of pig iron and 200,000 tons finished steel, to be increased in a few years to 700,000 and 450,000 respectively. Promoted by Cammel, Laird and Co., of Sheffield.

3. The Peninsular Locomotive Co. Capital

Rs.6,000,000, held partly by Kerr, Stuart and Co., of Stoke-on-Trent and partly by Indian capitalists. Will have the capacity to produce 200 locomotives a year to begin with.

The lead given by these firms was sure to be followed by others. (It has been proved to be so by subsequent events.) So tariff walls raised by the Indian Government would no longer operate against the British interests. They would protect the Indian key industries largely promoted and owned by British capital.

Besides, financial difficulties in the post-war years had obliged the Indian Government to raise import duties to a height which,for practical purposes, had Protectionist effects. From an average 3 per cent. ad valorem levied before the war for revenue purposes, the import duties had been raised from 11 to 15 per cent. Judged from this side, what remained to be done was to call a spade a spade—come out officially in favour of Protection for India and thus satisfy the traditional demand of the Nationalist bourgeoisie.

In the beginning of 1921 the following resolution, moved by Lallubhai Samaldas (an Indian merchant and financier), was passed by the Legislative Assembly :—

> "This Council recommends to the Governor-General in Council that His Majesty's Government be addressed through the Secretary of State with a prayer that the Government of India be granted full fiscal autonomy subject to the provisions of the Government of India Act."

Immediately after this resolution had been passed, the Secretary of State for India, in replying to a deputation from Lancashire (which had all along been the sturdy opponent to India's fiscal freedom), declared the decision

> "To give to the Government of India the right to consider the interests of India first, just as we, without any complaint from any other parts of the Empire, and the other parts of the Empire without any complaint from us, have always chosen the tariff arrangements which they think best fitted for their needs, thinking of their own citizens first."

This speech was followed by a despatch, dated 30th June, 1921, to the Government of India, announcing the decision of the British Government to accept the principle of fiscal autonomy.

In October, 1921, was appointed the Fiscal Commission

to examine the question of tariff, under the presidency of Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoolla—a great Bombay millowner. Out of the 11 members of the Commission 7 were Indians, all prominent in industrial, commercial and Nationalist political fields. One unprecedented feature of the Commission was that it had only one English official on it.

The Fiscal Commission submitted its report at the end of the next year. Basing itself on the conclusion "that the industrial development of India has not been commensurate with the size of the country, its population and its natural resources, and that a considerable development of Indian industries would be very much to the advantage of the country as a whole," the Commission recommended, among other things :—

1. That the Government of India adopt a policy of Protection with discrimination;

2. That a permanent Tariff Board be set up to consider the claims of particular industries for protection;

3. That raw materials and machinery be admitted free of duty;

4. That the Excise Duty on the Indian cotton industry be removed;

5. That no obstacle be raised to the free inflow of foreign capital, but that Government monopolies or concessions be granted only to companies incorporated and registered in India with rupee capital, and Indians on their directorates.

Five Indian members of the Commission (the President himself included among them) did not consider the verdict of the Commission wide enough, and supplemented the General Report with a minority dissent. The essence of their point of view will be interesting and useful to note, since that represents the demand of the most radical section of the Indian bourgeoisie. The dissenting minority wrote :—

1. There should be an unqualified pronouncement that the fiscal policy best suited to India is *Protection;*

2. It is a mere commonplace to say that a rich India is a tower of strength to the Empire, while an economically weak India is a source of weakness. . . . India would have been of far greater help to England during the war if the policy of Protection had been adopted at least a generation ago. . . . . This (revision of the

tariff policy) would have been to her great advantage, and would have been beneficial to the Empire. . . . India, inhabited by a fifth of the human race, can be of tremendous value, economic and political, both to herself and to the Empire, if development proceeds on the lines best suited to her conditions.

On the question of inflow of foreign capital, the minority appeared to differ from the view expressed in the general report. But this is what they said :—

> "We are unanimous in thinking that, in the interest not only of the consumers, but of the economic advancement of the country, it is essentially necessary that industrialisation should proceed at rapid paces. . . . . We will, therefore, state at once that we would raise no objection to foreign capital in India obtaining the benefit of protective policy, provided suitable conditions are laid down to safeguard the essential interests of India."

The conditions recommended by the minority, however, are the same as stated in the general report, namely: incorporation of companies in India with rupee capital and proportionate Indian directors.

In February, 1923, the Government of India declared the acceptance of the principle of discriminating Protection recommended by the Fiscal Commission as a whole. The Government Resolution, unanimously adopted by the Legislative Assembly, accepted "in principle the proposition that the fiscal policy of the Government of India may legitimately be directed towards fostering the development of industries in India."

A few months later, acting upon the recommendations of the Fiscal Commission, the Government appointed the Tariff Board consisting of three members, two of whom were Indians. Thus an agreement was reacehd between the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism on the vital question of economic antagonism. Without vitally injuring imperialist monopoly, concession was made to Indian capitalism at the expense of the masses.

The Tariff Board began, of course, with the Iron and Steel Industry. The Tatas immediately came forward with the demand for a 33.5 per cent. duty on imported iron and steel. On the recommendation of the Tariff Board, the Government, in May, 1924, brought before the Legislative Assembly the Steel Industry (Protection) Bill, which set up a tariff varying from 20 to 25 per cent. on fabricated iron and

steel entering the country and a large bounty on the production in India of railway waggons. The Bill authorised the Government to raise the duty in case one or more of the dutiable articles would be found to be imported into India at such a price as would be likely to render ineffective the protection intended. The Bill passed the Legislative Assembly with very little opposition. The Swaraj Party abandoned obstruction and voted with the Government.

The effect of Protection on the Indian iron and steel industry can be judged from the following estimated growth in the production of the Tata concern behind a tariff wall. Total production in 1923, 121,000 tons. It will increase to 250,000, 335,000, and 390,000 tons in the three succeeding years.

Hardly a year after the passage of the Protection Act, the Tatas declared that the duties did not give them enough protection and demanded its increase. The Government, with the sanction of the Assembly, granted the demand, not by additional duty, but by a substantial bounty on production to guarantee a fixed margin of profit.

The Tariff Board then recommended protection for the paper and cement industries, and is at present considering the claims of the coal mining industry. Since the industries, whose claims are to be investigated, are suggested by the Government, the protection for these industries is a foregone conclusion.

The climax of the policy, which has transformed the economic relation between the Indian bourgeoisie and British imperialism from antagonism to co-operation, was the abolition of the 3.5 per cent. Excise Duty on the Indian cotton industry. With the abolition of the Excise Duty, the premier industry of India also becomes "protected," because, as against the 3.5 Excise Duty, there has been a duty of 11 per cent. on the cotton goods imported, which duty remains in force. One of the outstanding Nationalist grievances has always been "the strangling of India's premier industry in the interest of Lancashire." The phenomenal growth of the Indian cotton industry does not justify the grievance. The industry, with an aggregate capital of Rs.300,000,000 (in round numbers) made a total clear profit of Rs.350,000,000 in the period of three years, 1919-21. Even when, in September, 1925, the workers (150,000) employed in the Bombay mills, were locked out to enforce a further wage cut of 11.5 per cent. (in addition to a 20 per cent. cut in 1924) on the pretext of "ruinous" trade depression, not less than half the mills

were paying a fairly high rate of dividends. However, the abolition of the Excise Duty removed the last cause of friction between the Indian bourgeoisie and imperialism. The political effect of this step has been to split the Nationalist Movement along the line dividing the big bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeosie.

This concession again was made not in deference to the demands of the bourgeois Nationalists. Consideration of Britain's own economic interest was there, beside the subtle policy of politically isolating the petty bourgeois Nationalists by showing the Indian capitalists that their economic growth was not only possible, but even could be fomented within the orbit of imperialist economy.

In spite of the enormous growth of native production, India still imports nearly 50 per cent. of her textile requirements, which until recently used to be supplied by Lancashire. But in the last years things have changed greatly. Japan has been breaking into the Indian market with alarming rapidity. Her share in the Indian trade increased from 0.3 percent., in 1914, to 9.1 per cent. in 1924. In 1925 the proportion was expected to be much greater. England cannot possibly compete with Japanese goods produced by sweated labour. Indian mills worked by coolie labour can alone do that; and the British bourgeoisie can always participate in the resulting profit by exporting capital to India to be invested in those mills. It is remarkable that before the abolition of the Excise Duty was declared, the President of Bombay Millowners' Association, N.N. Wadia, visited England and had conferences with Lancashire millowners. In view of the stormy opposition of Lancashire when the duty on cotton goods imported into India was raised from 5.5 per cent. to 11 per cent., without a simultaneous increase in the Excise Duty,the gracious acquiescence of Lancashire to the abolition of the small Excise Duty without touching the comparatively high import duty is remarkable. The explanation of this changed attitude is provided by the following quotation from a statement issued by a joint meeting of the Manchester millowners convened immediately after the announcement abolishing the Excise Duty :—

> "If the industrial and general situation in India improves in the way in which it is so much desired, it is clear that the Lancashire industry may hope for better trade as a result. That there is a potential purchasing power in India sufficient to engage the producing power of both Indian and Lancashire industries, cannot be

doubted. . . . . It is to be hoped that in the new situation now created we may find ourselves moving towards a position where the needs of the Indian market will be met to an increasing extent by her own manufacturers in their class of product, and by Lancashire in the types upon which she will naturally concentrate. Such a state of affairs would satisfy the legitimate aspirations of India, whilst not doing injustice to the Lancashire industry. If this situation, frankly recognised by both parties, could lead to the fostering of a better spirit of mutual sympathy, support, and accommodation, we would be prepared to accept any difficulties which may be imposed on Lancashire by the present decision in a generous manner." (*The Economist*, December 5, 1925, p. 939.)

The situation is obvious : Indian and British capital made up their age-long quarrel and came to an agreement aganist the common foe, Japan. Referring to the abolition of the Excise Duty, *The Economist* (December 5, 1925) wrote :—

"The fact of the matter is that times have changed. India has now fiscal autonomy, and it is useless for Lancashire to make protests against reductions in Excise Duties or increases in Import Duties. It must not be forgotten that this action of the Indian Government will probably be a more serious matter for Japan than this country. Lancashire realises more fully than ever that in the future she will have to concentrate her machinery more and more on the finer makes of cloth, leave the coarser materials to be made by the mills in the East. During the last few years leading authorities have noticed a desire on the part of Indian consumers of cotton cloth to purchase higher-quality goods. If this is maintained and extended, as there is reason for thinking that it will be, if the purchasing power of the natives is increased, then cotton manufacturers in this country have nothing to fear. It is primarily desirable that a spirit of friendship and goodwill should exist between the people in this country and of India." (*Economist*, December 5, p. 939.)

The abolition of the Excise Duty made a tremendous impression in India. Though reluctant to say so openly, the Nationalists generally recognised it as an unmistakable sign of a "change of heart" on the part of Britain ; and a "change

of heart" was all that the Nationalists wanted as the price the British Government on the basis of the reformed constitution.

Another very significant event was the appointment of a committee to investigate and recommend under what conditions foreign capital should be admitted into India. The report of the committee accepts all the conditions laid down by the minority of the Fiscal Commission. This means that in the immediate future industrialisation of India will be carried on jointly by Indian and British capital.

It will be interesting to examine the considerations which induced British imperialism to radically change its economic policy in India, as a by-product of which change the aspirations of the native bourgeoisie have been to a great extent satisfied. The political consideration has already been mentioned. It is the recognition of the fact that the struggle for national freedom is no longer the political expression of the comparatively weak capitalist and intellectual classes. Its social basis has been enormously widened to include practically the entire population. Its objective programme has, therefore, changed from constitutional agitation for economic concession and administrative reform to—Revolution. The quarrel between imperialism and the native bourgeoisie was over the division of the surplus value produced by the Indian masses. It will pay imperialism to lessen its lion's share to tiger's share, rather than to risk the loss of everything. British imperialism acted according to the Hindu dictum—"faced with total destruction, the wise forego half."

An examination of the economic consideration will, however, show that it will not cost imperialism nearly as much to buy off the services of the Indian bourgeoisie, and even the upper stratum of the middle classes, as against the revolutionary danger coming from the masses. As a matter of fact, it will cost nothing.

The interest of British capitalism demands not only guarding of Indian markets against Japanese and American aggression; a continual extension of the market is also demanded. Markets must be found—created—for the British manufactures consumed in Central and Eastern Europe before the war. India offers great possibilities in that direction. But the economic ruin of the Central European countries greatly reduced the purchasing power of India. That means,

just at the moment when British capitalism wants a bigger market in India, there is a shrinkage in the Indian market. In spite of a rise in the value of the total foreign trade of India (Rs.490,000,000 in 1922), the volume was 28 per cent. less than in 1914. The reason of this shrinkage is this : While on the average 60 per cent. of India's imports come from Britain, about 60 per cent. of her exports go to countries outside the British Empire. Since the war most of the European countries, that used to consume such a large portion of Indian exports, bought much less. The situation is illustrated by the following table :—

Total amount of exports to :	1914.	1922.
Austria and Hungary	99,748,000	8,355,000
Belgium	120,648,000	80,032,000
France	176,827,000	98,270,000
Germany (†)	263,558,000	162,777,000
Italy	78,351,000	58,378,000
Russia	24,542,000	35,000

(†) Germany's share went down as much as 13,859,000 in 1920.

This serious fall in her export trade naturally reflected upon India's ability to import, ultimately hurting the Britsh manufacturers, since the major part of her import comes from Britain. All along a large surplus of export over import represented the proceeds of imperialist exploitation, because the major portion of that surplus was used off to liquidate "India's obligations in Britain." In 1920 the balance of Indian trade (a balance artificially maintained in the interests of imperialism) was upset. Imports showed an enormous (890,000,000) excess over exports. Next year the disparity was reduced to 440,000,000 by a corresponding reduction in imports. The situation was extremely alarming for imperialism. There was a heavy deficit in the budget. The representative of the Government of India, Charles Innes, informed the Imperial Economic Conference (London, 1923) : "Thanks to the war and disorganisation caused by the war, we sell less and therefore we buy less. This decrease of trade hits us in many ways." Further on the same speaker explained the new economic policy of the Government of India. He said :—

"I am aware that it has caused some alarm in this country, but if, as we hope, the result of this policy (of Protection) is to increase the wealth and productiveness of India, then those who trade with India have nothing to

fear. Already that trade is considerable in volume, but it is small in comparison with the size of the country and the population. In India we have 315 millions of the people—roughly one-fifth of the human race, and if only we can raise the standard of living of these millions and increase their capacity to consume goods, India's potentialities as a factor in international trade and as a market are almost limitless."

In the new state of world economy, it has become impossible for the British capitalists to extract tribute from India in the shape of a large unpaid-for surplus of export over import. The greater part of the foreign market for Indian produce of raw material has been ruined almost beyond repair. Therefore, imperialist plunder must find a different expression. To arrest the shrinkage of British trade with India, caused by the reduction in the latter's export trade, her purchasing power should be otherwise increased. This can be done by raising the standard of living of the Indian people. The standard of living of the Indian people, again, cannot be raised unless the choking grip on her economic life is considerably loosened. On the other hand, since sufficient market for Indian raw produce cannot be found abroad, it must be created inside the country. This must lead to industrialisation. Industrialisation of a country with such enormous sources of raw material, cheap labour and potentially unlimited market, in its turn, will open up for British capital new fields guaranteeing the possibility of almost fabulous accumulation. British capital invested in India will extend the market for the production of home industries.

These are, then, the fundamental considerations which induced British imperialism to adopt a new colonial policy permitting the growth of Indian capitalism within certain limits.

To sum up. Since 1916, the British Government has introduced a series of economic measures that are greatly beneficial to the Indian bourgeoisie. Consequently the antagonism between imperialism and Indian capitalism has been, at least for the time being, almost eliminated. The political result of this changed economic relation has been reflected in a steady decline of the Nationalist demand, and a pitiable bankruptcy of the mainly petty-bourgeois Swaraj Party, whose programme reflected purely capitalist interests.

What are the cardinal demands of the Nationalist bour-

geoisie? Impetus to the industrialisation of the country; fiscal autonomy; protection. All these have been realised, incidentally in consequence of the attempts of British capitalism to overcome the serious post-war crisis by means of a readjustment of the economic basis of the Empire. The demand for self-government was put forward on the hypothesis that unless the native bourgeoisie possessed some political power, the programme of the free development of Indian capitalism could not have been realised. Now, it is demonstrated in practice that the economic programme of bourgeois Nationalism can be realised, in spite of the imperialist opposition to a rapid political change demanded by the petty bourgeoisie. In other words, the bourgeoisie has been convinced that its economic development is possible within the framework of imperialism.

M. N. ROY.

Book Reviews

"Through Roumania"

Through Roumania, by Paul Held. Münster Publishing House, Vienna.

OF all European countries, Roumania is perhaps least known to the general public. There has certainly been no lack of interest in this unusual land, but there is as yet no serious and comprehensive work embracing the whole essence of the political life and the economic structure of Roumania.

Paul Held's booklet by no means fills this gap. As shown by the title, it is only a casual and hasty review of conditions in this country. But it must be admitted that the author is not content with giving merely a superficial sketch. He makes a study of all remarkable phenomena and endeavours, within the narrow framework which he has chosen for himself, to get an insight into the social and economic conditions and problems.

For instance, he explains and appreciates correctly the political changes of the post-war period. The shifting, immediately after the war of the centre of equilibrium towards Transylvania, the provisional and partial transference of political power to Transylvanian industrial capital, the role allotted in this connection to the pro-government Peasant Party leaders, and finally the resumption of power by the Liberals after a preliminary phase represented by the provisional government of the eternal "honest broker," General Averescu—all these phenomena are brought forward in a proper light.

The author does not lightly ascribe the real motives for these changes to the desire for enrichment which would be the obvious thing to do. "On the one hand it was a struggle between the feudal and the capitalist forces for State power, and on the other a fight by the province for autonomy." In keeping with all historic traditions and the entire foreign and domestic political situation, a compromise between the various ruling and exploiting classes of Old Roumania, arrived at to avert a revolution, gave victory to the latter over the so-called liberated province. Thus the struggles between centralism and autonomous administration, and also between

feudalism and capitalism, contained an inner struggle between the big bourgeoisie of two parts of the country—the boyars (nobility) and the finance-capital of old Roumania on the one hand, and the industrial capital of Transylvania on the other. The struggle ended, as was to be expected, in a victory for the boyars (and their allies) for they had the army and all the other instruments of State power on their side. The constitution of the united "Greater Roumania" was adopted in Parliament as dictated by the self-styled "Liberal" section of boyars.

Without cumbersome statistical material the author deals with this question and also with the agrarian issue, the fundamental reality of Roumania.

Everything else that the booklet offers is interesting and accessible in form. All aspects of the political, cultural and administrative public life of Roumania, all the customs and usages of a society which wants to be (and partly succeeds in being) something betwixt a feudal society and a bourgeois one driven into decline—all this is outlined to give a vivid and complete picture of Roumania. Some exaggerations might have been left out, but they do not seriously impair the value of the booklet.

Too little attention has been paid up till now in Socialist literature to the peculiarities of capitalist Roumania, and to a proper appreciation of this country from the international viewpoint. It is high time that this should be remedied. The International Communist movement especially should not under-estimate the role played by the present counter-revolutionary Roumanian bourgeoisie. Six years ago the ruling clique of Roumania throttled the Hungarian Soviet Republic. On this clique the Tsankoff Government in Bulgaria has leant confidently, and with its indirect but considerable and active help the international bourgeoisie was able to crush but yesterday the risings of the Bulgarian toiling masses, in order on the morrow to begin a comprehensive campaign against the citadel of the international proletariat.

Paul Held's booklet can be well recommended for a better understanding of the peculiarities of the advance guard of world reaction.

Al. DOBROGEANU-GHEREA.

" THE GREAT PACIFIC WAR "

The Great Pacific War (A History of the American-Japanese Campaign of 1931-33).... By Hector C. Bywater, London, 1925. (317 pp.)

THE Great Pacific War of 1931-33"—this is the sensational title of the new work by Admiral Bywater, a well-known officer in the United States Navy. In his first work, "Naval Power on the Pacific Ocean," which created such a stir, Bywater dealt with the question of a naval conflict between the Dollar Republic and Japan exclusively from the strategical point of view. In the book under review this representative of United States jingoism treats the same question from a tactical standpoint.

The Serajevo shooting served as a signal for the Imperialist War of 1914-18. The explosion of a bomb in Tokyo in January, 1931, provokes a war between America and Japan. The author with his usual cynical and practical outlook makes no secret of the fact that causes of a material order lie at the bottom of this conflict—a struggle for control over China. The Peking Government gives an American syndicate an iron and coal concession in Kyang-Si. Japan protests, declaring that Kyang-Si is within her sphere of influence. The internal situation in Japan is very unstable. Domination by the military clique sharpens the social conflicts within the country. The shadow of revolution haunts the footsteps of the ruling class. The Communist movement grows. In January, 1931, a general strike is declared. Disturbances in the capital and province become more frequent and the police are powerless to cope with the crowd. A fiery-spirited student throws a bomb at the Prime Minister. The Japanese Government decides to deflect the attention of the country on to a war with America, thereby paralysing the revolution. . . .

That is how the author pictures the causes of a conflict between Japan and America. The latter, of course, is an innocent lambkin compelled to defend herself from the aggressive imperialism of Japan.

During the first two years the American fleet suffers defeat. The causes are: absence of strong naval bases on the Pacific Ocean, and the great distances which prevent the American Admiralty concentrating its naval forces along the Japanese coast in time. The favoured position of the Japanese fleet, with a base near the Phillipine Islands, is evident. The American Commercial Fleet is prevented from cruising freely

on the Chinese coasts; American foreign trade falls catastrophically, and in the beginning, Japan dominates the Pacific Ocean. Towards the close of 1932, America strains all her material forces, and the American navy, by means of skilful manœuvring, suddenly catches the Japanese warships napping near Yap. A great naval battle ensues in which the Japanese fleet, greatly weakened and damaged, is compelled to quit the field of battle and seek shelter in a fortified naval base.

The outcome of this is the defeat of the Japanese army, which had occupied Manila during the first few months of the war. Japan is compelled to sue for peace. The generous Americans eagerly accede to this. **The U.S.S.R. for its neutrality receives the southern part of Sakhalin.** China is granted complete independence, and Korea something similar. All the German islands received by Japan under the Treaty of Versailles are handed over to America. "And, nevertheless," concludes the author, "war is too expensive a business, and the material losses are not redeemed. Woe to the conquered, but neither is it very joyful for the victorious."

Such, in short, is the canvas upon which the author throughout more than 300 pages paints samples of naval battles by air, sea and submarine fleets.

The aim of the author is to frighten the Yankees with the Japanese danger and to arouse in them patriotic sentiment, to make them unsparing in sacrifices in order to strengthen and fortify a fleet for the United States, capable at the very outset of destroying the Japanese naval forces.

Judging by the existing naval forces of America and Japan as they were in 1925, we see that of 18 American front line ships only 10 (with 108 guns) are capable of fighting at a maximum range, restricted by the visibility limit to about 14 miles. The Japanese front line ships, although there are only 10 of them altogether (96 guns) thanks to their superiority in speed (between 2 and 6 knots) could prevent the American ships coming within closer range. With respect to cruisers the American fleet is also inferior to the Japanese.

The author warms up the patriotism of the Yankees, inciting them to become generous and to exert pressure on the government to make it increase the number of naval units. The manœuvres of the American fleet in the Pacific Ocean

during 1925 were also utilised largely by the American militarists for naval propaganda.

The appearance of such literature (with quite a number of other symptoms) is a clear testimony to the possibility and inevitability of an America-Japanese war, if not in 1931-33, then perhaps a few years later. The Washington Conference did not stop the growth of armaments. Japan for her part is preparing feverishly for a future conflict with America.

World imperialism is preparing a new war before which the war of 1914-18 shrinks into significance. The fact that the American author of the book under review allots to the U.S.S.R. the role of a neutral onlooker is an indirect indication of the tremendous role which the U.S.S.R. is **already** playing in the Far East.

P. KITAIGORODSKY.

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